

**À LA RECHERCHE DE LA FRANCE
PERDUE**

**AN EXAMINATION OF PRIVATE DIARIES
WRITTEN DURING THE OCCUPATION
OF 1940-1944**

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**À la recherche de la France perdue:
an examination of private diaries written during the
Occupation of 1940-1944**

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by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of private diaries written during the Occupation of France, 1940-1944. The authors are not necessarily of French origin and did not always directly experience the Occupation. What they all provide is an insight into the period at the individual level. The aim of this thesis is to see how these individual testimonies contribute to a more comprehensive portrait of how the French lived during this period, and suggest new approaches for the historiography of the Occupation period.

Although the analytical focus of this study is predominantly textual, there is, nevertheless, a determination to place this textual analysis in an historical, rather than a literary, context. This study privileges the diaries of Léon Werth, Charles Rist, Jean Guéhenno and Andrzej Bobkowski because these selected diarists provide the greatest historical insight into the Occupation period. In order to appreciate why these diarists are more historically relevant than the other selected diarists, it is necessary in the introductory chapter to first examine the process of writing the private diaries. The first chapter demonstrates that the Occupation was from the outset a heterogeneous experience for all the diarists. The overall aim of this thesis is to demonstrate what divides the selected diarists as well as what unites them. The second chapter illustrates how History from above endeavours to categorise these individual experiences in order to impose a sense of order on them. The perspective of history from below reveals that for all the developments throughout the Occupation that had a universal impact on shaping attitudes and behaviour, there were just as many forces acting against these general trends to prevent a uniform experience. The third chapter demonstrates that the examination of life at the everyday level is just as important, if not more so, in gaining a comprehensive understanding of life during the Occupation period. These areas of inquiry combine to yield a portrait of a highly complex testimonial genre, where the ambivalence and the ambiguity of the period are reflected in the contrasting and often conflicting views of the authors.

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INTRODUCTION

Le journal intime

«Au fond de l'histoire, il y a des sentiments.»¹

History and the individual testimony: the example of Léon Werth.

On June 11, 1940, Léon Werth, aged sixty-two, left Paris for the village of Saint-Amour. The circumstances surrounding his departure may well have been exceptional but he had made the journey every year with his wife. Werth, a writer of Jewish origins, was adamant that Paris would not fall to the advancing Germans, even though he acknowledged that his conviction was not based on any sound reason.² His departure, in his mind, was more precautionary than one motivated by fear for his personal safety. This particular annual pilgrimage to the Jura, however, would be like no other. Werth could have had no idea that he had embarked on not only an arduous journey of thirty-three days but also a journey into one of the most painful chapters in French history. He would become inextricably caught up in the mass movement of French escaping from the German advance, which would come to be known as *l'exode*. Moreover, he would have to endure almost all of the Occupation years in Saint-Amour, cut off from his normal Parisian surroundings as well as family and friends. In this climate of uncertainty and solitude, he chose to capture his experience of the Exodus and the Occupation in written form. His personal account of the Occupation years will form the cornerstone of the private diaries examined in this thesis. His individual account, however, would be but a single voice testifying to a period, which would affect an entire nation of forty million people.

This raises the question how can a solitary figure represent or make sense of an event, which occurred on such an unprecedented scale? What value or relevance can an individual testimony add to the History of the Occupation period? Werth was neither a dissident general nor an omnipotent octogenarian, so what can an

¹ Werth, Léon, *Déposition. Journal 1940-1944*, (Paris: Editions Viviane Hamy, 1992), pp.18-19.

² *Ibid.*, 33 jours, (Paris: Editions Viviane Hamy, 1992), pp.11-12.

anonymous voice bring to the historiography of the Occupation period? Georges Gùsdorf argues that in Europe “*le moment historique de l’individualité*” had become outdated.³ European society had been transformed into a mass civilisation where unprecedented numbers of individuals were being collectively caught up in its movements. The experience of an individual prisoner of war, according to Gùsdorf, mattered little in the global scheme of things. The Occupation affected an entire nation, which requires a wide encompassing view. The problem with such an argument, however, is threefold. Firstly, such an argument repudiates the idea that individuals could record details, which fell outside their own direct experiences.⁴ Secondly, it implies that each individual experience is homogeneous. To talk only of French behaviour during the Occupation, for example, is to ignore the multifarious individual variations of that collective behaviour. Thirdly, it reduces the French to anonymous beings, and denies the fact that they ultimately experienced the Occupation at the individual level rather than at the national level.

The very title of Werth’s diary, *Déposition*, clearly indicates an historical intent to his writing. He was determined to provide evidence of the Occupation years for future generations of France. This came not only from his empirical observations in Saint-Amour but also from secondary sources: the radio, newspaper, or conversational accounts. Werth acknowledged that the sheer scale of the war tended to overshadow the individual experience:

*La faim, la mort, l’héroïsme ont perdu tout caractère individuel. On meurt dans les faubourgs, dans les camps de concentration, sur les champs de bataille. Qui? Personne. Des contingents, des unités, des formations, des armées. Dans combien d’années ou de siècles retrouverons-nous un homme individuel avec nom et prénom?*⁵

Yet that did not alter his perception of how he lived the Occupation period, nor did it falter his determination to document and chronicle his observations of his external world. Despite the global problems that afflicted France, Werth was still very much conscious of his own individual struggle. If he denied his own personal experience of the Occupation, he would, in effect, be denying the voices of all the others affected

³ Gùsdorf, Georges, *Auto-bio-graphie*, (Paris: Editions Odile Jacob, 1991), p.287.

⁴ Admittedly, the balance between reporting the outside world and the self varies considerably from one diarist to another. The diary of Jean-Paul Sartre, for example, is dominated by *je* whereas the diary of Jean Galtier-Boissière has little authorial comment. Werth’s diary enlightens the reader as much about Saint-Amour as it does about himself. Yet the examination of these diaries on a collective basis enables these inconsistencies to be evened out.

⁵ Werth, *Déposition*, p.434. (22.2.43)

by the Occupation. Werth refused to allow the overall enormity of the Occupation to overwhelm his own unique viewpoint:

Je ne veux plus cesser d'être un homme pour devenir un animal historique, je ne veux plus m'anéantir dans une pitié trop vaste, qui cesse d'être de la pitié, qui devient elle-même historique. L'époque me touche, me traverse, m'envahit, s'attaque à ma chair. Mais elle opère sur de tels chiffres et de telles dimensions que je n'ai pas assez de points de ma chair pour en recevoir les excitations.⁶

His private diary is an affirmation of his existence during the Occupation period, and a reminder that he had to confront and overcome his own particular problems.

Güsdorf claims that the individual is confined to too narrow a horizon to make any valuable judgements:

L'intelligibilité de l'histoire ne s'établit pas à l'échelle de l'individu; c'est un phénomène de compensation, la résultante d'une immense quantité d'effets et de causes dont la perception correcte implique un recul suffisant. Balloté par les circonstances qui disposent de lui sans qu'il s'en rende compte, confiné dans un horizon étroit, l'individu ne peut pas prendre la mesure de l'événement; son espace et son temps sont trop étriqués, ils ne dépassent pas le creux de la vague prochaine; ses interprétations, s'il se permet d'en avoir, sans rapport avec la réalité, n'ont aucun intérêt.⁷

The consideration of this claim is the fundamental argument for this thesis. Güsdorf would have us believe that the correct appreciation of history requires a detached view of the multiple, complex events well after those events have occurred. What Güsdorf fails to take into account is the living of history and the representation of that living of history. History has a tendency to devalue the individual experience, preferring to place it into artificial groupings or predetermined concepts. This thesis is concerned with the way in which the diarists, recording their own individual experiences, represent the reality of life during the Occupation. Their cloak of anonymity will be lifted.

The private diaries examined in this thesis are testimony to the fact that those who lived during the Occupation each had a uniquely personal view of that period, and that these testimonies can, therefore, bring a greater understanding to the period. How did it feel to live in France during the Occupation? What preoccupied the minds

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.110-111. (28.11.40) Werth specifically had in mind the two million prisoners-of-war and the fifty thousand *Lorrains* chased out of the recently annexed territory. Unlike Güsdorf, Werth refused to allow such collective experiences to detract from his own individual experience.

⁷ Güsdorf, *Auto-bio-graphie*, p.287. See also Laborie, Pierre, *L'opinion française sous Vichy*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1990), p.25. There is never one single cause in history. After taking into account the notions of contingency and necessity, there are many other complex factors to take into consideration, which are rarely coherent. There are always ambiguities and contradictions, which prevent one from drawing simple conclusions.

of the diarists that shaped their decisions from day to day? How did they keep going under such trying circumstances? Such questions cannot be answered by all-embracing concepts. What the diarists elected to accord the greatest significance may well not correspond to the traditional themes favoured by historians but it may well also differ from one particular diarist to another. That is not to say that one cannot draw general conclusions from their individual experiences but, rather, it is the heterogeneity, just as much as the similitude of their experiences, which is of particular importance to this study. This is the role of history from below as opposed to History from above.⁸ This requires not a detached, impartial overview of what occurred but, rather, a subjective, personal account of what took place. This is where Werth's *journal intime* comes to the fore in that it provides the reader direct access into Werth's consciousness and the world around him at the time he was writing his experiences.⁹

The private diary adds another dimension, which History cannot provide. A general history has a beginning and an end. The diary has no end in mind and its present is filled with hopes and anxieties. The individual is in a state of conflict whereas in a general history these problems have already been surmounted. The diarists were oblivious to the end-point of the Liberation. The Occupation started for them in June 1940, but they lived thereafter from day to day without knowing precisely when the end would come. This state of anxiety is best represented by the private diaries. Werth, for example, was caught up in an exchange of artillery fire. He wrote:

*"Je conte ce que j'ai vu, ce que j'ai senti. Je ne tente pas une reconstitution historique, ni un récit après coup, cohérent et critique, d'opérations militaires. Je ne sais rien, en ces minutes, de l'ensemble où cet épisode a sa place."*¹⁰

This experience can be seen as a microcosm of his Occupation experience. Werth's private testimony is concerned with capturing a personal insight into the world he

⁸ A review of the contemporary historical works on the Occupation, from both perspectives, will be made in Chapter Two. For the moment, it is necessary to acknowledge that the work of historians such as Pierre Laborie, who targeted their research at the popular level, resemble more the approach undertaken in this thesis. That is not to say, however, that the two approaches are entirely analogous. The important difference is that such historical studies collectively place the individuals into larger groupings, albeit far more selectively than those of History from above. The individual, therefore, remains anonymous.

⁹ Güssdorf, *Auto-bio-graphie*, p.12. Güssdorf uses Michel Beaujour's term, *miroir d'encre*, to convey this sense of living the period through the eyes of the author.

¹⁰ Werth, *33 jours*, p.44.

experienced rather than establishing a critical and ordered review of what he experienced. The writing of his next work may well have had historical intent but Werth could not escape the subjective *modus operandi* of his writing. Yet as the epigraph for this chapter suggests, feelings are just as important in explaining history as facts and figures. The formulation belonged to Werth's historian friend, Lucien Febvre, whose approach lies in effect between *Histoire* and *histoire*. He wanted to take into account the global vision of a period from its view of the world. To deny the voice of the individual, therefore, is to deny the personal feelings felt by each individual, which ultimately governed behaviour.

Furthermore, it is essential to consider that History is always receding.¹¹ Recounting the past can never serve up reality as it truly once was. Indeed, there is no infallible method of communicating reality through the written form. Each method has its own strengths and limitations. Herein lies the strength of the private diary: it is written at the crossroads of the actual witnessing of history and the awareness of the historical reality to come. Werth realised near the end of his journey to Saint-Amour that what he was witnessing was history in the making but at the same time he was insufficiently aware of the historical significance of what he was writing about and would come to write about:

*Le plus maigre cadeau de ce qu'on appelle la civilisation, c'est que le détail des événements, sinon leur sens n'échappe point tout à fait aux hommes. Mais ce hameau du Gâtinais est loin des événements comme le Sahara. Et jamais les destins individuels ne furent, comme en cette guerre, plus étroitement liés à ce que nous appelons l'histoire. Notre vie est faite d'attente, d'angoisse et de longueur de temps.*¹²

Werth's journey to Saint-Amour was effectively a journey into the unknown but, at the same time, he was cognisant that his individual experience, along with all the other individual experiences, were bound to history. The recording of his individual experience, therefore, would be in part a representation of that history. What his individual testimony offers to History is a sense of immediacy. What can never be taken away from Werth's writing is the presence of himself as the author – and the world around him – at the very time that he was experiencing those events. Films, photographs or newspapers can all transport their audience back in time to the

¹¹ The historians Eric Conan and Henry Rousso described the Vichy years as an ever-present past (*Vichy: un passé qui ne passe pas*, (Paris: Fayard, 1994)) but they were targeting the impact of the Vichy years on the French nation after the Liberation rather than the representation of the Vichy years in an historical sense.

¹² Werth, *33 jours*, p.129.

Occupation but no other medium can fully relate to its audience the private thoughts and feelings of those living during the Occupation.

Werth is, therefore, more than just an eyewitness to the period. As he chose to make a written record of the period whilst he was experiencing it, the part of him that made that written record becomes frozen in history. The sense of immediacy, moreover, does not diminish with the passage of time.¹³ Historians arrange their research material according to their own priorities, which may not reflect the preoccupations of the period but, rather, those of the present-day.¹⁴ They can do so because they are prophets of the past, as they know in advance what will happen next.¹⁵ Thus, historians studying the Occupation period cannot help but be influenced by the shadow of the Liberation on that period. The diarists, *in situ*, recorded their experiences of the defeat and of the Occupation in a chronological manner. They knew what had come before but did not know what was going to happen. The significance of time, therefore, is a crucial concept to bear in mind when evaluating the behaviour and attitudes of the diarists during the Occupation. With the benefit of hindsight, it is easy to be mistaken that things became progressively clearer with the passage of time. History is concerned with smoothing over any rough edges in order to create a coherent overview: “*Selon le dénouement général, l’histoire unifie, ordonne, traduit en clair ces signes épars, obscurs ou les laisse tomber.*”¹⁶ Yet in its attempt to give a sense of order to the chaos, history moves away from its fundamental complex nature. The private diaries offer a unique perspective to the turmoil of the times:

*Que nous ayons si mal connu les événements, que les nouvelles nous soient arrivées ainsi, sans ordre, sans lien, le plus souvent absurdes, cela étonnera sans doute les témoins sérieux qui «synchronisent» après coup, qui donnent à leurs souvenirs un solide contour historique: «Nous autres, hommes du Moyen Age.» Ceux qui content leurs souvenirs les corrigent, les charpentent, ne nous donnent le plus souvent qu’une reconstitution, une abstraction de souvenir.*¹⁷

¹³ Werth would come to meet up in Saint-Amour with his friend Saint-Exupéry, who would take the manuscript for 33 *jours* to the United States with the aim of finding a publisher. Saint-Exupéry believed that he had succeeded in this aim but the publishing house, Brentano’s, would inexplicably never publish the work. The general public would have to wait more than fifty years for the work to be published, and yet it still retains its sense of immediacy today.

¹⁴ The issue of Jewish persecution in wartime France, for example, will be explored in Chapter Two.

¹⁵ Güssdorf, *Auto-biographie*, pp.255-256.

¹⁶ Werth, *Déposition*, p.452. (30.3.43)

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.488. (17.6.43) See also p.327. (27.7.42)

History from below may well afford us a more chaotic and less rounded representation of the lives of those individuals enduring the Occupation yet, in this sense, it is a true reflection of how they lived.

The diarists may have experienced, in broad terms, the same events of the Occupation – the signing of the armistice, the entire occupation of France, the Liberation – but they were all exposed to these events in different situations. Werth's experience in rural Saint-Amour would have been quite different to the experiences of those diarists living in occupied Paris. His geographical situation was not the sole cause of his feelings of isolation and solitude. Werth returned to Paris just before the Liberation but had to remain in hiding. Werth's experience, in turn, was shaped by those feelings, so it is only natural to consider that his own experience would have differed from other diarists' experiences. Güssdorf is right to argue that "*l'erreur est ici de considérer l'histoire individuelle comme un fragment de l'histoire universelle, chaque histoire formant un ensemble de significations qui s'oppose à l'autre.*"¹⁸ Just as no two individuals are alike so too are no two individual histories alike. The diarists were all limited in what they could write about by both their environmental and personal limitations. That does not seem evident in the *journal intime*, as the self becomes the centre and there are no outward bounds restricting the author's view. What I contest is Güssdorf's assertion that "*l'histoire réelle n'existe que dans la mesure où elle est réactivée dans la mémoire d'un historien, ou de plusieurs; dont chacun s'approprie une partie du patrimoine épistémologique disponible.*"¹⁹ This would mean that history can only be revived by the historian and cannot be witnessed on an individual level at the time it was taking place.

What Güssdorf fails to appreciate is that it matters little that the diarists were unaware of the overall significance of what they were witnessing or whether their individual testimonies might differ from one another. The diarists' inherent lack of omniscience and objectivity are compensated by their uniquely personal perspectives, which are forever frozen in time. Güssdorf himself admitted: "*L'univers historique ne nous est accessible qu'à travers ses reflets dans des existences individuelles.*"²⁰ The macrocosmic nature of history denotes the sum of all individual experiences. If the personal nature of the diaries can contribute to a further understanding of the

¹⁸ Güssdorf, *Auto-bio-graphie*, p.417.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.452.

Occupation period, why should the study of such testimonies, in their own right, not be considered of historical significance? Febvre argued that Werth's diary is "*un admirable document historique*" but his critical attitude of the history profession led him to ask: "*Les historiens. Mais liront-ils ces livres? [...] Quelle étrange «France occupée» nous dessineront-ils dans leurs manuels?*"²¹ He believed that *la vraie* image of France during the Occupation could be found within the pages of Werth's *Déposition*. This study is by no means an attempt to challenge the historiography of the Occupation period but, rather, an attempt to illustrate how such an approach from a different perspective can bring about a greater historical understanding of the Occupation period.

The private diaries as historical tools.

Jean-Pierre Azéma wrote, in his presentation of Werth's *Déposition*, that historians have not utilised the *journal personnel* enough in their research.²² Historians in recent times have begun to appreciate the historical value of the private diary. Julian Jackson, Robert Gildea and Philippe Burrin, for example, employ a wide range of diarists to supplement their research in the archives. This is a significant change from the pioneering research of Robert Paxton, who worked exclusively in the German archives, as the French archives were still not available to the general public. Yet there still lacks a general study of the Occupation period where the private diaries are privileged as the primary source.²³ The research literature on private diaries focuses almost exclusively on their literary dimensions as opposed to their historical value.²⁴ The purpose of this thesis is to thoroughly examine the

²¹ Texte de Lucien Febvre, *Les Annales*, (1948), Werth, *Déposition*, pp.23/30.

²² Werth, *Déposition*, p.9.

²³ There is the unsatisfactory work of David Boal, *Journaux intimes sous l'occupation*, (Paris: A. Collin, 1993). See pp.10 and 155-162. Ernst Jünger's Parisian diaries are the cornerstone works for Boal but he is very vague as to his criteria for this selection. He tends to favour diaries written in Paris as they are, in his mind, more representative of France than diaries written in the provinces, even though France was still a predominantly agricultural country. He makes the flippant remark that Werth's diary is an excellent work to discover life during the Occupation... in the Jura. Boal dismisses Werth's diary as being motivated out of frustration at his isolation and solitude. There is no thought that his writing was a serious attempt to document the Occupation years, and illustrates the tension between his desire for the Occupation to end and the waiting for that desire to be carried out. He makes the point that Guéhenno's diary was written *sous cloche* but at least it was written in Paris. There is no suggestion that both diaries represent the important psychological battles that afflicted the diarists throughout the Occupation and the effects that struggle had on their opinion and behaviour.

²⁴ Alain Girard's *Journal intime*, for example, is more concerned with the mechanics of self-writing rather than an illustration of how the writing of the private diary can be useful in a historical sense.

historical contribution that the private diaries offer to History and where their differences in perspective might contribute to a more thorough understanding of the period. The purpose of this section, therefore, is to introduce the diarists who assume a prominent status in this thesis and, by examining the content of their writing as well as their approach to their writing, explain the reasons why some diarists are more relevant in an historical sense than others.

This thesis has privileged private diaries over memoirs in that they are more authentic in their reflections of the past. Memory, over time, becomes a flawed version of the past. Time is not altered or distorted in the private diary, and the diarist remains oblivious to the future.²⁵ The memoirs of de Gaulle, for example, were written in the third person, as he maintained that General de Gaulle belonged to the history of France whereas de Gaulle the private man only belonged to himself.²⁶ The private individual was pushed to the background by the importance of the public office he held. The reader is denied access to de Gaulle's private thoughts and inner conflicts. Moreover, there is the danger of thinking that the personal identity of an individual is fixed in an abstract and absolute place, whereas it is constantly changing and shaped by life experiences. People writing their memoirs are looking back on their past experiences but they are not the same individuals they were when they experienced those events.²⁷ The private diaries, on the other hand, are a true representation of the lives of the diarists, and the world around them, at that particular given time.

It is useful to ask the question what if the private diaries were the only resource that we were able to use to study the Occupation period? How would their unique vision of the Occupation compare with the views of historians? Undoubtedly, we would have a personalised view of the Occupation, where feelings assumed an overriding importance over facts and figures. The private diaries recount their own history, which does not necessarily relate to that of History from above or that of the

²⁵ Girard, Alain, *Le journal intime*, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1986. 2^e éd.) p.18. The diarist still relies, to some extent, on memory to record recent events that remain strong in the mind. It would be impossible to record everything whilst it was happening.

²⁶ Gùsdorf, *Auto-bio-graphie*, p.466

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.10-11. Gùsdorf breaks down the process of self-writing into three categories: *Autos* represents the identity, the me, conscious of itself and its autonomous nature; *Bios* represents the continuity of that identity as well as its past; *Graphie* represents the exclusive technical properties of self-writing. The writing, therefore, is not simply a mirror image of the reality being lived. The *Autos* is being shaped by the *Bios*, which in turn changes the nature of the *Graphie*. This is why individual histories are not fragments of universal history, since each individual's *Autos* and *Bios* are different.

forty million French citizens who endured the Occupation. It was not the diarists' intention to compete with the historians of the future but, rather, to provide a personal insight into the Occupation. Their vision would differ from one diarist to another because their writing was motivated by different factors. Some diarists wrote out of a desire to seek comfort and refuge from an inhospitable world, others wrote out of anger, others searched for answers to questions which plagued them. It could be said that Werth was motivated by all these factors. He was perhaps the least subjective, as he was conscious of wanting to record as much as possible in order to provide a comprehensive 'deposition' of the Occupation years. His field of vision may have been wider than other diarists in terms of what he was willing to portray, as opposed to what he actually observed. Yet his vision of the Occupation did not differ from the other diarists in that he could not escape the subjectivity of his writing. He was not a detached, distant observer of the Occupation but, rather, someone who was intimately involved in the events unfolding around him.²⁸ His particular circumstances – his education, his beliefs, or his social and geographical situation – determined the overall flavour of his writing. In order to appreciate, therefore, the historical value of the private diaries, it is important to know through what eyes each diarist viewed the Occupation.

The use of Werth alone as a diarist, to this point in the introduction, has been deliberate. It illustrates the depth of an individual testimony and the advantages an individual voice can offer a general history of the period. Yet at the same time it should never be taken that the private diaries are impartial historical documents that are equal in their utility. Werth was the most diligent of the diarists studied in this thesis in terms of his commitment to the writing of his diary. He was not interested in the literary dimensions of the private diary, as opposed to other diarists like André Gide, but in the historical value of what he was writing. Although he was a Jew taking refuge in Saint-Amour, he never let that dominate his writing.²⁹ The routine of

²⁸ Even the diary of Jean Galtier-Boissière, (*Journal 1940-1950*, Paris: Edima, 1992) which often has no overt authorial comment, reflects his own individual character.

²⁹ Jean Malaquais' *Journal de guerre* and *Journal du métèque* (Paris: Editions Phébus, 1997) are more obviously an account of a Jew in France. Originally from Varsovia, he was sent to the frontline in 1939 without ever being formally naturalised as a French citizen. He was captured when the fighting finally began but would eventually escape. His first diary, *Journal de guerre* would be published in New York in 1943 but his second diary, *Journal du métèque*, which provides an account of his run from the Gestapo and the French police through to his escape from Marseilles in late 1942 to Venezuela, remained for a long time unpublished. His evident contempt for France, despite being tempered by his love for France, may well provide the reason for its neglect.

writing at the same time and in the same environment provides the perfect conditions for writing.³⁰ Taken out of his familiar surroundings and plunged into isolation and solitude, Werth had nothing but time on his hands to write. Werth had no work or family distractions to keep him from his writing, which goes some way to explaining why Werth's diary is easily the fullest and richest text. His aim was to provide a testimony which would represent life during the Occupation as closely as possible: "*Mon récit est fidèle. Un phonographe n'eût pas fait mieux.*"³¹ To achieve that aim, Werth was determined to provide as full a text as possible: "*Qu'on ne me reproche pas d'aller chercher des documents dans la poubelle. Je répète que tout est signe et symptôme.*"³² He read the Lyons newspapers as well as clandestine texts like the *Cahiers du Témoignage chrétien*. He listened to *Radio Nationale* as well as the BBC and Swiss radio in order to be informed about all the influences that might affect the French as a whole.

Three other diarists deserve to be recognised in a similar fashion to Werth: Charles Rist, Jean Guéhenno and Andrzej Bobkowski. None of these diarists had nearly the same amount of time at their disposal to write, and yet they all share a common determination to write on a regular and detailed basis. The writing of a diary requires a certain degree of stubbornness and defiance; a refusal to relent with the examination of the self and the world outside. But very few diarists maintained their writing vigil on a consistent basis. The fact that these diarists were so committed to their writing indicates that they were equally committed to what they were writing about. Not all the diaries were focused equally on the outside world and the inner self, which means that not all diaries can provide a full insight into either the character of the period or the perceptions and thinking of the period. The diaries of Werth, Rist, Guéhenno and Bobkowski were not only *descriptif* but also *interrogatif*. The diaries which are of particular historical importance to this study are those that go beyond the simple level of recording observations about their personal experiences of the Occupation. That is not to say that the diaries that merely make such observations hold little historical value but, rather, those diarists who endeavoured to write on a more complex level merit closer attention. These diarists often used their writing to search for answers to questions which were plaguing them. The writing of

³⁰ GUSDORF, *Auto-bio-graphie*, p.31.

³¹ Werth, *Déposition*, p.294 (24.5.42) See also p.11. Azéma describes Werth as a *spectateur engagé*.

³² *Ibid.*, pp.368-9. (24.10.42)

a diary can be a means of getting off one's chest the preoccupations of the mind. The diarist writes about a preoccupation in order to reach the end of the thought in the desire of getting rid of it. This is significant because it not only allows the reader to know what was preoccupying the writer at the time but it also reveals, if these preoccupations keep recurring, that the writer was unable to find answers to these preoccupations.³³ The preoccupation with survival, for example, during the Occupation is an important consideration. To see how much time diarists were devoted to writing about the difficulties of obtaining provisions or materials is of historical significance. Yet it is also significant to see how much time they devoted themselves to more complex and abstract notions, which have traditionally been the domain of historians. Rist, for example, frequently traced throughout French history the reactionary, defeatist inclinations of a certain section of the *bourgeoisie*.³⁴

The diaries of Werth and Rist, despite the different writing environments in which they were written, bear a remarkable resemblance to one another. Both reveal an avid appreciation of French history, which saw them view the events of the Occupation as a part of that history's evolution. The demarcation zone did not prevent them from adopting a scathing attitude towards Vichy, nor from placing their faith in an Allied victory. Rist came from a bourgeois, Protestant background and was of a similar age to Werth. He was sixty-five when France officially declared war on Germany, which goes some way to explaining their similar outlooks. Another reason was that the Occupation exacted a heavy toll on both men. Rist's son, Léonard, would become a prisoner of war after the signing of the armistice, and another of his five sons, Jean, would be killed fighting in the Resistance in August 1944. Yet there were important differences between the two men. Originally a university professor, Rist became involved after the Great Depression in the world of economics and banking. His elite position gave him access to people of high positions beyond the reach of most other diarists.³⁵ Indeed, he was asked to be the Vichy ambassador in the United States, and even had a private meeting with Pétain. His busy work schedule sees none of the boredom and solitude associated with the writing of Werth. The psychological

³³ Günsdorf, *Auto-bio-graphie*, p.101. For example, Werth keeps returning to the question: *Où est-il, le peuple de Michelet?*

³⁴ See Rist, Charles, *Une saison gâtée*, (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1983), pp.121-122 (28.12.40), pp.257-258 (25.6.42), p.271 (5.9.42), p.282 (18.10.42), p.388 (6.2.44), p.404 (24.5.44).

³⁵ The diaries of Edouard Daladier, *Journal de captivité 1940-1945*, (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1991) and Marc Boegner, *Carnets du Pasteur Baigneur 1940-1945*, (Paris: Fayard, 1992) offer a similar perspective. Boegner often met with Pétain and although Daladier was imprisoned during the Occupation, his previous office afforded him a privileged view of events.

struggle of lasting until the end is, therefore, more apparent in Werth's writing. Yet the fact that Rist continued working throughout the Occupation is more representative of the French people. Despite these important differences, the fact that they still shared a great deal of similar views on the state of France illustrates how much the diarist's background, rather than the environment, could shape the diarist's writing.

It is significant, however, to note that the differences between the two diarists can often be attributed to the different environments in which they wrote. Rist's work often kept him within the circles of the *haute bourgeoisie*, and so his interaction with the masses was restricted to his observation of *le peuple* in public places. Furthermore, the poorer sections of Parisian society would have lived in different *arrondissements* to that of Rist, which would have further restricted his observations of *le peuple*. Werth, on the other hand, had no choice but to interact with the people of rural Saint-Amour. He was exposed to the thinking of the peasantry on an infinitely more intimate scale. He shared Rist's view of the decadent nature of France but he could not help but feel at times that the corruption of the *bourgeoisie* had very much infiltrated the ranks of *le peuple*.³⁶ His vision of life in a tiny, rural village may well have been less dense compared with Rist's view of the most populous French city but it can also be seen as more representative of the social strata of Saint-Amour than Rist's narrower vision of Parisian society. Rist's relative isolation from the masses would cause him to adopt a much more optimistic view of *le peuple*.³⁷ He preferred to target his contempt at a certain section of the *bourgeoisie*. Although the title, *Une saison gâtée*, was chosen by the first editor of Rist's diary, he could have just as easily entitled it *Une bourgeoisie gâtée*. Rist's notion of France's decadence was confined to the elite of French society.

It would be wrong, however, to suggest that Rist's writing was motivated exclusively by his desire to attack the section of the French *bourgeoisie*, who had welcomed the defeat and the German occupation as a means of protecting their interests and getting rid of the Republic. Certainly, it is a recurrent theme in his writing but the scope of his writing, in general terms, is not appreciably different to that of Werth. His range of topics varied from the difficulties of procuring provisions to his concern for his family, from his observations of Vichy to the events of the war.

³⁶ Werth, *Déposition*, p.66. (21.10.40)

³⁷ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.305. (28.12.42)

Rist would often question the utility of recording his own thoughts, but he would never lose sight of the overall advantages of writing his diary:

*Parfois je me dis que le journal est bien inutile, et sera peut-être pour moi dans l'avenir le témoin de mes propres erreurs de jugement. Même s'il doit être cela je ne regretterai pas de l'avoir rédigé et d'avoir gardé la mémoire de nos impressions au jour le jour pendant une époque aussi affreuse, et qu'on sera pressé d'oublier quand la paix sera venue. Ce sera peut-être la mesure de nos illusions, peut-être aussi la mesure de ce que nous aurons pu garder de bon sens dans la tourmente.*³⁸

History is mostly concerned with facts as opposed to impressions. That is why historians can look back on a period without fear of colouring the facts with their own judgements. When it comes to impressions, however, the historian is susceptible to influences that might well not have been present during that period.

Jean Guéhenno, born in 1890, was from a working-class family. Although he was forced to leave school at the age of fourteen to work in a factory, he did complete his *baccalauréat* and studied at university after the First World War. He would divide his working career between teaching and writing. The Occupation, however, would see him choose, in his mind, the only honourable option: silence.³⁹ This effectively brought an end to his writing career, at least on an official level. He would play a part in the literary resistance, and part of his private diary would be published in *Les Editions de Minuit* under the title *Dans la prison*. Guéhenno was particularly critical of those writers who continued to publish their work during the Occupation, as, in his mind, this detracted from their status as prisoners. He would eventually publish his diary in 1946 but during the Occupation years his diary was a means of breaking the silence. It was a means of speaking out in an environment where speaking the truth could have serious repercussions. However, he freely admitted: “*Ce journal, tel qu'on le lira, est sombre, trop sombre.*”⁴⁰ The private diary held for Guéhenno a psychotherapeutic function. It was invariably going to accentuate the low times rather than the highs, which places an unfair emphasis on the negative aspects.⁴¹ The editor of Kafka's diary noted:

Tout journal produit nécessairement une déviation de perspective dont il convient de tenir compte. Quiconque écrit un journal ne note généralement

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.170. (17.6.41) See Werth, *Déposition*, p.573. (22.2.44)

³⁹ This decision was certainly made easier by the fact that he could fall back on his teaching job. Diarists, such as Cocteau, would often justify their position by arguing that they had to keep working in order to survive.

⁴⁰ Guéhenno, Jean, *Journal des années noires*, (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1947), p.11.

⁴¹ Girard, *Le journal intime*, pp.527-529.

*que ce qui lui pèse ou l'irrite. C'est là une manière de se libérer d'impressions douloureuses et négatives. Les impressions positives ne demandent pas à se décharger dans l'écriture; on ne les note (...) que dans des cas exceptionnels, ou lorsqu'on l'a décidé (dans le cas de notes de voyage par exemple). Mais la plupart du temps, un journal évoque une courbe barométrique où seules les basses pressions sont enregistrées.*⁴²

This was certainly the case with Guéhenno's diary, *Journal des années noires*, in that he was more intent on venting his rage than searching out the positive aspects of the Occupation. Guéhenno was not being deliberately critical but he evidently felt angry that the Nazis were impacting negatively on France and its culture, and that certain sections of French society were willingly aiding the Germans in that cause.

There is another element that needs to be examined, which explains the imbalance of negative material in Guéhenno's diary. The fear of disclosing information about his work in the Resistance and the activities of his colleagues, such as François Mauriac and Claude Morgan, prevented him from recording many positive and noble acts during the Occupation. He felt at times able to disclose the imprisonment or the execution of his colleagues but he never felt able to reveal his attachment to those people who were actively fighting for the honour of France. If his documents had been found by the French or German police, such an incident would have inevitably led to his detainment and probable death, not to mention all those whose names were implicated by association. His diary is an excellent source for examining daily life during the Occupation and those aspects which caused division and resentment. Yet it does not tell the whole story of the Occupation. Guéhenno warns in his preface:

*Cette prudence fausse le ton de ce journal. On n'y trouve pas assez ce qui, à travers la honte et la misère, nous fit vivre. La France n'était pas si triste. Elle n'était pas acoquinée à son malheur. On endurait mais on durait. Je voudrais que le lecteur, en me lisant, pensât toujours qu'à travers ces pages ne cessait de courir l'espérance, comme elle courait les rues de Paris: en se cachant.*⁴³

⁴² Gtisdorf, Georges, *Les écritures du moi*, (Paris: Editions Odile Jacob, 1991), p.333. The diaries of André Gide (*Journal 1939-1949. Souvenirs*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1954)) Lise Deharme (*Les années perdues*, Paris, Librairie Plon, 1961) and especially of Jean Cocteau (*Journal 1942-1945*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1989)) contradict such an argument. These diarists were more intent on celebrating their own particular pleasures than emphasising the negative aspects of life.

⁴³ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.12. None of the diarists selected for this thesis give an insight into life in the Resistance. François Mauriac also came from the ranks of the literary resistance but his writing was more concerned with creating a moral code for the French to follow. Marc Bloch, who actively fought in the Resistance, concentrated on examining the reasons for France's catastrophic defeat.

His diary is in stark contrast with the diaries of Lise Deharme and Jean Cocteau, who preferred to accentuate the positive aspects of the Occupation. Where he differs from such diarists, however, is his determination to represent as fully as possible life during the Occupation. The aforementioned diarists were more concerned with relating exclusively their own personal experiences with no regard for abstract notions such as politics or ethics. Furthermore, the authentic nature of Guéhenno's diary – although by no means peculiar to his private testimony – contrasts with the testimonies of Sacha Guitry and Simone de Beauvoir, who wrote their accounts after the Occupation years. Their writing was motivated by a desire to portray themselves in a more favourable light. Guéhenno refused to make any amendments to what he had written during those years other than to edit out passages which were overly critical of certain people.

Andrzej Bobkowski had no such restrictions in his writing, since he had no ties with the Resistance, and his Polish nationality afforded him a sense of detachment from his personal observations of occupied France. Born in 1913, Bobkowski was on his way from his native Poland to Latin America when war broke out in Europe in 1939. The Occupation years would effectively block his passage from France to Guatemala, and he would spend the majority of those years in Paris. Yet he did not share Guéhenno's view of occupied France being a prison. Bobkowski comes across as an independent, free spirit, who seems largely unaffected by the Occupation. His attitude seems to contradict the historical view that life during the Occupation was harsh:

Bien que ce soit la guerre en France, on continue à voir des vestiges de richesse. En dépit du pillage allemand, en dépit des réquisitions répétées, on ne peut pas parler de la famine. Il y a toujours du choix, il y a toujours une certaine variété et il est possible d'organiser sa «petite vie». On retrouve dans l'atmosphère ce rien qui a si vite fait de vous rendre heureux.⁴⁴

His diary serves as a reminder that each individual experience is relative. He believed that France was still a free country despite the presence of the German military and its secret police:

Nous avons toujours notre liberté, déjà restreinte, certes, mais encore vivable. Il faut désormais déclarer les changements de domicile ou de lieu de résidence; il y a des quantités de règlements nouveaux à respecter, mais dans l'ensemble, on est libre. Encore, maintenant on entend presque tous les jours dans les cafés des gens traîner Pétain dans la boue et ne parler de

⁴⁴ Bobkowski, Andrzej, *En guerre et en paix. Journal 1940-1944*, (Montricher: (Switzerland) Les Editions Noir sur Blanc, 1991), p.453. (13.4.43)

*Laval qu'en appelant «ce sale Auvergnat», ou encore menacer des Allemands. A voix haute. Ici on possède encore le droit de parler et non seulement de penser.*⁴⁵

Certainly the German attitude was much more lenient towards France than the one adopted in his native Poland. Yet Bobkowski does not mention the persecution of the Jews, those people who were captured and tortured by the Gestapo, or the abundance of denunciations sent to the German authorities by French citizens.⁴⁶

Yet one could even go further to suggest that Bobkowski inadvertently introduces the concept that his diary can be seen as a negation of *Histoire*. To talk, in global terms, of the French living under German vassalage or the inadequate diets of the French during the Occupation belies the fact that some individuals, relative to their situation, were able to overcome these difficulties with no discernible discomfort. Bobkowski's diary is replete with his astonishment over the ease of life in occupied France and the ability to continue one's life as before. Does his experience not suggest that other individuals shared the same view, which would go against the historical notion that life during the Occupation was infinitely harsher than before the defeat of June 1940? Similarly, Werth would raise the question: "*Où est-il, le peuple de Michelet?*"⁴⁷ The absence of revolutionary spirit amongst the peasantry of Saint-Amour, along with their selfishness, caused Werth to entertain whether this historical notion of *le peuple* was merely an invention of Michelet. Was such a notion as artificial as that of the 'miracle' of Joan of Arc?⁴⁸ Werth argued that centuries had passed by without any mention of Joan of Arc by historians. It was as if Michelet had plucked both these concepts from thin air.

Bobkowski was certainly not afraid to speak his mind and challenge his pre-existing views of France. He admitted that he had firmly believed in the myth of France but the defeat had made him aware that France only held on to vestiges of its former *grandeur*. This Polish intellectual, who spoke French fluently, was certainly not out of place in France. He represented Polish workers in Paris and endeavoured to help them when they found themselves on the wrong side of the law. Although he

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.339-340. (28.6.42)

⁴⁶ The diaries of Maurice Toesca, *Cinq ans de patience*. (Paris, Editions Emilie-Paul, 1975) and Edmond Duméril, *Journal d'un honnête homme pendant l'occupation*, (Thonon-les-Bains (Haute-Savoie): Editions de l'Albaron, 1990) provide an invaluable insight into the effects of the German occupation on France. They were in a privileged position to observe the enforced cohabitation of the French and Germans at an official or administrative level.

⁴⁷ Werth, *Déposition*, p.308. (13.6.42)

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.82. (7.11.40) The section, *La patrie*, in Chapter Three will explore whether this notion is similarly an historical invention.

still retained a healthy respect for the country of Balzac, he was not afraid to draw unfavourable comparisons between France and Poland:

La pauvre Pologne sans ressources et la riche et grande France se seront défendues aussi longtemps l'une que l'autre. Nous estimions scandaleuse la façon dont nous nous étions défendus, mais comparé à elle, la façon dont se sont défendus les Français est véritablement criminelle.

Nous voulions nous défendre mais nous n'avions pas de quoi, alors qu'eux avaient de quoi se défendre mais ne le voulaient pas. Je me demande si la France s'en relèvera. Cette idée me hante depuis hier.⁴⁹

He still believed that France was a powerful country but feared that it had irrevocably lost its pre-eminent position. The title of his diary, *En guerre et en paix*, can also be seen as a reflection of his attitude towards France. At times Bobkowski is enraged that the French, who still lived in a prosperous country compared to Poland, should complain about their situation. Yet other times he admired how the French were able to rise above the war and remain indifferent to the German Occupation.

Whilst these four diarists undoubtedly provide the most comprehensive representation of life during the Occupation, this does not mean that the other diarists examined in this thesis cannot contribute to a greater understanding of a particular event or aspect of the Occupation. To write and maintain a diary over a period of more than four years requires great dedication, which means that none of what any of the diarists elected to write about should be dismissed as being insignificant.

The diarists' idiosyncratic vision of their experiences – whether it be through the particular position they held, their personal beliefs, their motivations for writing or the individual struggles that they faced – contribute to a greater collective understanding of the period. That is not to ignore the limitations of each individual testimony, and why the other diarists examined in this thesis merit a subsidiary role to the aforementioned diarists. This can be attributed, for example, to their particular motivations for writing their respective diaries or the style in which they wrote their respective diaries.

⁴⁹ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.26. (18.6.40)

Les journaux intimes: strengths and limitations.

It is important to acknowledge that the four diarists privileged in this thesis afford us the most detailed, overall representation of life in Occupied France. Each of their individual testimonies on their own merits could contribute to a greater historical understanding of the Occupation period. The same cannot be said for the other diarists examined in this thesis. They are more limited in their contribution to the historiography of the Occupation. This raises the question why does the testimonial corpus of this thesis include diarists who offer a less historically comprehensive portrait of life in Occupied France? The answer to this question lies less in the individual merits of their testimonies but more in what they collectively represent as a whole. The corpus of private diaries may well comprise a narrow sample of individual testimonies but this is attenuated by the fact that, as a group, the corpus provides a wide-ranging coverage of reactions to historical events as well as the everyday hardships endured by those living in Occupied France, and the moral challenges which they confronted throughout the Occupation. This section will outline what historical events will be examined in this thesis as well as the everyday challenges the diarists faced but it is first necessary to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the other individual testimonies, and discuss all of the tendencies that they represent. It is not only what unites the diarists that is of historical significance but also what divides them. The diaries of secondary importance may not be as rich as the four diaries of Werth, Rist, Guéhenno and Bobkowski but that does not mean that they are unable to provide a valuable contribution and offer an alternative voice on certain issues.

The notions of freedom and refuge, for example, were often instrumental in the writing of the private diaries during the Occupation. Werth took refuge in his writing from his solitude in Saint-Amour.⁵⁰ The diary represented for Guéhenno somewhere that was unaffected by the German occupation. Maurice Toesca shared Guéhenno's view that the Germans had effectively stripped the French of their freedom: "*La*

⁵⁰ See also Simone de Beauvoir, *La force de l'âge*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p.390: *Et puis un matin, la chose arriva. Alors, dans la solitude et dans l'angoisse, j'ai commencé à tenir un journal. Il me semble plus vivant, plus exact que le récit que j'en pourrais tirer.*

*France est au secret. Nous sommes bien des prisonniers.*⁵¹ Toesca held a high position in the Paris Police Headquarters and worked in conjunction with the German military authorities. The title of his diary, *Cinq ans de patience*, suggests an *attentiste* attitude on his behalf, where he waited until France was released from its German captors. He sought refuge in his writing, as it afforded him the freedom he was otherwise denied by the German jailers:

*Ce journal m'est un refuge. Il me permet de garder la tête froide, L'analyse fait du bien. L'écriture réduit les errements de l'imagination. Je ne veux rien consigner sur ces feuillets qui ne soit témoignage sincère, sans passion. La liberté, en cet instant où je sais qu'elle va m'être ravie, me paraît être un privilège délicieux. Un instinct profond me dit de la sacrifier à l'obligation sociale.*⁵²

The question that needs to be asked for all the private diaries is what sort of *témoignage* is each particular diary providing? Toesca's diary provides an insight into the lives of those French people who worked alongside the Germans. The notion of collaboration assumed a negative connotation during the Occupation but collaboration was not always carried out in a political or economic sense.

It would be wrong to think that diarists who worked in similar fields also held similar beliefs. Edmond Duméril is another example of a diarist who worked on a daily basis with the German military authorities.⁵³ Although he was devastated by the defeat, he took the opposite view to that of Toesca in that he sincerely believed that the best course of action for the French was to cooperate fully with the Germans. Their contrasting views represent the complexities of the period in that both men believed that their course of action was honourable. The moral universe of the Occupation contained infinitely more shades of grey than black and white. The minor diaries, therefore, add more shades of grey to the palette. Toesca and Duméril, for example, provide a valuable addition to the austere view taken by Guéhenno.

The minor diarists as a whole also help to reveal what important historical documents the major diarists have written. Their limitations show up the strengths of

⁵¹ Toesca, *Cinq ans de patience*, p.63. (June 1940) See also Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.18: *Je me réfugierai dans mon vrai pays. Mon pays, ma France est une France qu'on n'envahit pas.* (25.6.40)

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.55. (16.6.40)

⁵³ Like Toesca, his diary is dominated by his work, which gives the overall impression that his vision of the Occupation is seen almost exclusively through the eyes of a civil servant. There tends to be less emphasis placed on his observations of the Occupation through the eyes of an ordinary individual. But his position as *Conseiller attaché au cabinet du Préfet de Loire-Inférieure pour les relations franco-allemandes* serves as another reminder that the German presence in France was not always distinct from the French world. The jailers often interacted with the prisoners.

the major diarists. Their limitations can, for the greater part, be attributed to their motivation for writing their respective diaries. Unlike most of the other diarists, Duméril had kept a diary all his life. He believed that it was essential to record the events of the time in order to make more elaborate judgements on those events in the future:

*Le temps est un grand maître! Il met progressivement chaque homme et chaque événement à sa vraie place: telle catastrophe ne fut en réalité qu'un léger accident et tel fait qui nous parut minime a eu des conséquences incalculables. C'est pourquoi, autant il est indispensable d'inscrire chaque soir les événements de la journée, autant il est nécessaire de n'utiliser ces notes pour une œuvre d'histoire qu'après plusieurs années, quand le recul du temps permet de juger, de filtrer en quelque sorte documents et souvenirs.*⁵⁴

After the war Duméril would use these notes to publish in 1947 a philosophical-historical account of the war entitled *Visions d'histoire*. Jean Bourgeon comments, in his introduction to Duméril's diary, on the difference in style between the two pieces of writing:

*Le journal, écrit à chaud, rédigé à la hâte, livre les impressions du moment, sans recul. Le recueil «Visions d'histoire», rédigé après la guerre, juge les faits et les hommes dans le contexte historique de la Libération et des passions qu'elle soulève.*⁵⁵

The danger of such an approach to writing history is illustrated by the individual testimonies of Simone de Beauvoir and Sacha Guitry. Although de Beauvoir's *La force de l'âge* incorporates her *Journal de guerre*, written from September 1939 to January 1941, her other diary written far more intermittently throughout her life, and her correspondence to friends, it is ultimately written after the Occupation period. The work is, therefore, rendered susceptible to the changing climate of the post-Liberation period. Even she herself admitted that such a work could not wholly capture the attitudes and behaviour of the time and give valuable insights into the period, however subjective they might be, as other private diaries written at the time succeed in capturing:

*J'ai bien souvent senti, une fois la paix revenue, combien il était difficile d'en parler à quelqu'un qui ne l'avait pas vécue; maintenant, à près de vingt ans de distance, j'échoue à en ressusciter, même pour moi, la vérité. A peine puis-je en exhumer quelques traits, quelques épisodes.*⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Duméril, *Journal d'un honnête homme pendant l'occupation*, p.13.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.14.

⁵⁶ De Beauvoir, *La force de l'âge*, p.513.

Despite these misgivings, her reactions towards the declaration of war and the subsequent defeat, which were taken mostly from her *Journal de guerre*, appear to reflect more her thoughts at the time.⁵⁷ And although she appears at times to be justifying, rather than describing, her work— she attracted criticism for her work in *Radio Paris* – her testimony gives an insight into the ethical dilemmas artists faced during the German occupation.

Similarly, Sacha Guitry provides an insight into how people could pay the price for their decisions during the Occupation. Sacha Guitry, an actor, playwright and screen-writer, had already achieved by the Occupation wide-known success and fame, to the extent that he was sought out by several Germans, including Ernst Jünger. Such success, notoriety and seemingly such familiarity with the Germans, however, would see him arrested after the Liberation and put on trial for alleged crimes of collaboration. Guitry was clearly embittered by this experience and felt that he was being made a scapegoat for the collective shame of the French people during *les années noires*. It is obvious that the motivation for writing *Quatre ans d'occupations* was clearly to prove his innocence. It is not a private diary but, rather, an *auto-justification* of his behaviour and attitudes throughout the Occupation written after the period. Yet that does not change the fact that the arguments he puts up in his defence reflect an alternative perspective to the austere position adopted by Guéhenno and Mauriac.

Jean Cocteau is another diarist who attracted a similar amount of criticism during and after the Occupation. He was a distinguished artist in many fields: a poet, a playwright, a film-maker, a writer, a painter and a sketch artist. Cocteau took the individualistic but also nationalistic approach that it mattered little what other people thought of his decision to keep working, as he was convinced that he was best serving France. Cocteau's diary is obsessed with recording his artistic world, and, like Guitry's and de Beauvoir's testimonies, raises the question whether continuing one's work was patriotic or dishonourable. He would be particularly singled out for his public eulogy of the German sculptor, Arno Breker. His friendship of German artists, in his mind, transgressed national borders. Cocteau had no concept of politics and rarely concerned himself with the war. This indifference is represented by the fact

⁵⁷ It should be noted that although the diaries of Werth, Guéhenno, Rist and Bobkowski all remained predominantly untouched, there is less certainty with other diarists. One cannot be always certain that there have been some minor alterations made to cast the author in a more favourable light.

that his diary inexplicably commences in 1942. Yet what his diary offers is evidence of the fact that there was more often than not a blurring of lines between the occupier and the occupied. Guéhenno's position was an exception to the rule. Furthermore, like Bobkowski's diary, Cocteau's can be seen as a counterbalance to the historical notion that the Occupation was a massive intrusion on the lives of the French. One could continue to work during the Occupation as if the defeat had not happened.⁵⁸

Pierre Drieu La Rochelle was similarly unconcerned with other people's opinion of his work. His position as editor of the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, however, would be impossible to justify as an attempt to promote French culture above German culture. The NRF was unequivocally under the control of the Germans, and published notorious works such as Chardonne's *L'été à la Maurie*, which unashamedly promoted the partnership of France and Germany. But herein lies the interest of Drieu's diary: he unrepentantly outlines his reasons for his attraction towards fascism:

*Ce journal, étant un vrai journal sans grand soin littéraire, n'aura d'intérêt que beaucoup plus tard – si quelque érudit s'intéresse à mon témoignage politique pendant cette période... On y verra nettement la suite de mes idées et comment j'ai toujours combiné l'amour morose de la France avec une foi naïve et violente pour l'Europe.*⁵⁹

The writing of his diary held little appeal for Drieu. There is no sense of seeking refuge in his writing and, unlike the diary of André Gide, he paid no attention to the literary value of his diary. Instead, Drieu offers the unique historical perspective of a collaborator in the sense of what the French people would eventually come to recognise the term as: a traitor. He offers an insight into why some people felt compelled to completely abandon France to embrace the enemy, but he also illustrates the fact that his case represents only a tiny minority of the French people.

One further consideration deserves particular attention, which has to do with the social class and gender of the private diarists. Günsdorf makes the point that writers have never been, as a general rule, well-off or exceptionally privileged. More often than not they have known financial worries or have endured hardship.⁶⁰ Yet, equally, which is not made all that clear by Günsdorf, writers are not drawn from the

⁵⁸ André Roussin (*Rideau gris et habit vert*, Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1983) and Lise Deharme's diaries (*Les années perdues*) are also testament to the fact that the war and the Occupation did not always cast a black shadow over one's attitude.

⁵⁹ Drieu La Rochelle, Pierre, *Journal 1939-1945*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), p.327. (8.2.43)

⁶⁰ Günsdorf, *Auto-bio-graphie*, p.229.

lower end of the social scale. The overwhelming majority of the diarists examined in this thesis came from the lower ranks of the *bourgeoisie*. The diary of Frédérique Moret, a young working-class girl, provides a valuable contrast to the overwhelming *bourgeois* perspective of the other diarists. Forced to abandon her home in the Ardennes by the German invasion, her diary provides an account of her struggle to survive thereafter. Despite her youth, she makes some interesting observations and, furthermore, from a female perspective. Much like the preponderance of *bourgeois* diarists so too was there a preponderance of male diarists. The implications for this heavy representation of male, *bourgeois* diaries are that the private diaries cannot be said to be truly representative of the French population. That is not to say that women or the very rich and the very poor are not represented in these diaries but, rather, that they are overwhelmingly seen through the eyes of the male *petit bourgeois*. One must be mindful of this fact when drawing wider conclusions.

The aim of the first chapter of this thesis is to situate the reader within the minds of the diarists at the very beginning of the Occupation. No appreciation of their mindset in the summer of 1940 can be undertaken without an examination of their attitudes and feelings leading up to that period. The temptation is to think that June 1940 heralded the beginning of the Occupation but it only did so in an historical sense. The diarists, blinded to the future, concentrated on the cessation of fighting rather than the consequences of the cease-fire. Historians have a tendency to interpret the overwhelming acceptance of the armistice as an overwhelming acceptance of the Vichy regime. Such an interpretation implies that the French were aware that the armistice would lead to the inception of Vichy. The diarists remind us, however, that their concerns at that particular time in history lay more with the immediate past than with the immediate future. Their reality of June 1940 is, therefore, not influenced by the shadow of events to come.

Chapter Two will focus on the notion of change over time. It is by no means an exhaustive chronological review of the Occupation as a whole but, rather, an examination of specific salient points that illustrate that the reality of the Occupation did not appear to the diarists in a logical, lucid fashion. The persecution of the Jews and the Anglo-American landing in North Africa will provide examples of how the diarists' living testimonies can raise new questions to particular historical events. As much as new developments brought about an evolution in attitudes among the diarists, there were constant factors that brought about a regression in their behaviour.

History has a tendency to overemphasise the former and disregard the latter. The impenetrability of the future and the weight of time were crucial in shaping the reality of the diarists throughout the Occupation. Such concepts are often overlooked by historians, which creates the mistaken impression that a linear line of awareness can be traced from June 1940 right through to the Liberation. History also has a tendency to oversimplify and generalise. Its use of broad terms to denote general behaviour belies the significant individual variation that occurred within these broad frameworks.

Chapter Three will focus on the aspects of the private diaries that greatly contribute to this authentic image of life during the Occupation. The simple everyday problems that afflicted the diarists are just as important in explaining their behaviour as the 'big' issues or events, which have been traditionally favoured by historians. All the diarists shared the common aim of lasting through to the end of the Occupation. The problem was that none of them knew when that end would come. It would be more often the mundane rather than the extraordinary that would test each diarist. The problems of obtaining food or the moral dilemma of working whilst France was effectively under German control are both examples of the difficulties each diarist faced on a daily basis. And yet these difficulties were experienced very much unevenly from one diarist to another. What the historiography of the Occupation period often overlooks is to what extent such personal considerations shaped general attitudes and behaviour.

CHAPTER ONE

Désirs et réalités

La Révolution ne sera que ténèbres pour ceux qui ne voudront regarder qu'elle; c'est dans les temps qui la précèdent qu'il faut chercher la seule lumière qui puisse l'éclairer.¹

Introduction: the starting-point of the *journaux intimes*.

It is interesting to note the starting-point of the various private diaries written during World War Two. Although France only effectively started fighting in May 1940, it is important to remember that France had officially been at war since September 1939. Some diarists, such as Rist, chose to commence their private thoughts and observations after the declaration of war in September 1939. Others, such as Bobkowski, began their writing after the German invasion of France in May 1940. And then there were those, such as Guéhenno, who undertook their writing after the signing of the armistice in June 1940. Their commitment to begin their writing, therefore, was triggered off by different events, which in itself is significant. The fact that France was again at war would be for some the crucial moment, whereas for others the defeat was the defining moment. It is a reminder that the diarists all experienced, directly or indirectly, the same events throughout the Occupation but they reacted to them in different ways. Rist, for example, started his diary after the declaration of war, but he was initially only preoccupied with how the war and France's foreign policy would impact on his work. His writing is almost telegraphic, recounting meetings with various bank officials and government ministers. It is only after May 1940 that his text becomes more developed and detailed, which signals his real interest in the period. Similarly, the other three principal diarists considered in the introductory chapter, whose writing began just before or after the defeat of June 1940, will be largely absent from the first part of this chapter, which will examine the

¹ The Occupation period has clear parallels with Tocqueville's words on the Revolution of 1789. (*L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*, (Paris, 1967), Laborie, p.70)

attitudes and feelings of the diarists leading up to the defeat. The focus of certain other diarists, which covers the period well before the defeat of June 1940, accords their testimonies a special significance in this chapter.

There is, therefore, a temporal dimension to consider when evaluating the private diaries. History clearly defines the Occupation period within a finite framework, beginning with the armistice of June 1940 and culminating in the Liberation of Paris in August 1944.² Historians examining the Occupation period may well broaden their focus beyond these parameters, in order to provide background to the period, but they are, nevertheless, largely confined within these two reference points.³ The diarists, however, were unaware of the overall historical significance of what they were witnessing. Just as none of the diarists knew beforehand when they would begin writing so too were they unaware of when they would stop writing. No diarist could have conceived in June 1940 that the war would last for another five years. Their decision to conclude their writing, therefore, was equally arbitrary as their decision to commence their writing. Werth, for example, would stop writing after the arrival of de Gaulle in Paris in August 1944, whereas Galtier-Boissière would continue his writing well after the Liberation. In this sense, the timeframe in which the diarists worked was limitless. The writing remained open to the seemingly infinite possibilities of the future as well as what had already happened in the past.

There were some diarists examined in this thesis, however, whose writing started at a more clearly defined point and who equally had a more definite end-point in mind. These were the diarists who were mobilised as frontline soldiers: Georges Friedmann, Georges Sadoul and Jean-Paul Sartre. They began their writing after their mobilisation and presumably anticipated writing until the fighting stopped. These diarists figure prominently in the first part of this chapter – particularly Friedmann and Sadoul – because their testimonies go beyond the mere descriptive and attempt to search for the reasons behind their predicament. Why was France at war? How did they feel about being at war? Were they confident of victory? Their position as frontline soldiers made the answers to such questions that much more relevant and pressing than for those civilian diarists situated well behind the frontlines.

² It should be noted that some parts of France were not fully liberated until 1945.

³ The works of Jean-Louis Crémieux-Brilhac, *Les Français de l'an 40. Tôme I. La guerre oui ou non?* and *Tôme II. Ouvriers et soldats*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1990) focus exclusively on the events leading up to the Occupation to place the reader in the context of June 1940. There are a number of other works which focus on the *débâcle* period but they too can be seen in a global sense with respect to examining only the *drôle de guerre* period.

Consequently, they provide a more comprehensive image of their own mindset during the period leading up to the defeat of 1940.

The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to represent the reality of the diarists at a specific moment in time: the summer of 1940. This can only be achieved by first examining what had shaped their attitudes leading up to that period. Indeed, the attitudes that they formed before the defeat, coupled with the circumstances of the defeat, go a long way to explaining their behaviour for the entire Occupation period. Part One of this first chapter will examine the impact of the First World War on the French national psyche and its impact on the diarists' attitudes towards the Second World War. The diaries reflect a strong pacifist sentiment amongst the civilian population, which had been fostered not only by the senseless destruction of the First World War but also its lasting detrimental effects on France well after the fighting had stopped. The price of victory was felt to be too high, which saw a great reluctance on the part of the French to enter into another war. Yet at the same time the diaries also reveal an overwhelming confidence in France's ability to repel any German invasion. When war was officially declared in September 1939, the illusion of French military supremacy blunted the distress that France was once again at war. The climate of uncertainty and inaction surrounding the *drôle de guerre* played on this overconfidence and clouded each individual's perception of reality. Moreover, the absence of fighting and the stalling of events did nothing to prepare the French for when *blitzkrieg* or lightning war finally came.

Part Two will explore the impact of these feelings on the diarists after the catastrophic defeat. The military *débâcle* would precipitate into a civilian *débâcle*. It quickly became evident that the government propaganda of military supremacy had been believed as much by the government as it had been by the civilian population. The diarists observed a clear absence of organisation from above, which had the effect of laying the blame for the defeat on the hands of the French government rather than the French military. Furthermore, the sense that the French had been betrayed and abandoned by their government encouraged the idea that they were on their own. All that they had been told had proven to be false so they were forced to construct their own realities. Not only had their confidence in France's ability to win the war been completely shattered but their image of France had also been greatly distorted. What had not been broken, however, was the overwhelming aversion to war. The fact that France had been taken out of the fighting appears to have surpassed the shame of

defeat. The diarists were, on the whole, more concerned with the immediate past rather than the immediate future. Yet at the same time the defeat brutally made the diarists aware of France's general ineptness and this awareness would be harder to overcome than the defeat itself. The process of national disintegration intensified after the defeat, with the individual withdrawing further away from the national community. This was an uneven process, however, as the Occupation was not a homogeneous experience for the diarists. Different regional and individual experiences could affect each diarist's overall perception of the Occupation.

Part One

The coming of war

*Ce fut une des périodes les plus vaseuses de ma vie. Je ne voulais pas admettre que la guerre fût imminente, ni seulement possible. Mais j'avais beau faire l'autruche, les menaces qui grandissaient autour de moi m'écrasaient.*⁴

To fight or not to fight?

No understanding of the diarists leading up to June 1940 is possible without an examination of the effects of the First World War on the French national psyche during the inter-war period. Although France had been on the winning side in 1918, victory had come at a terrible cost. Not only had France borne most of the fighting on its soil but it had also sustained the most casualties. One out of every ten Frenchmen was killed with the total number of fatalities estimated at one and a half million. On top of that 4 266 000 were wounded, which included approximately 1 200 000 permanently maimed.⁵ *Plus jamais ça* was the understandable catchphrase of the 1920s. The French had greeted the First World War in 1914 with great national fervour but no French citizen after 1918 was under any illusions as to what any future war would cost France. Simone de Beauvoir illustrates how the brutal legacy of the Great War could impact on an individual's thinking towards the prospect of another war: “*les images de l'autre guerre me revenaient au cœur: condamner à mort, par humanitarisme, un million de Français, quelle contradiction.*”⁶

The arrival of the politically and economically troubled 1930s, however, saw the first major challenge to this strong pacifist sentiment. The 1920s had been relatively peaceful and prosperous years for France but the 1930s saw a sharp economic downturn. Furthermore, conflicts from Spain to Finland posed a serious threat to peace in Europe and undermined the efforts France had made in the 1920s to

⁴ De Beauvoir, *La force de l'âge*, p.327.

⁵ Bernard, Phillipe & Dubief, Henri, *The Decline of the Third Republic, 1914-1938*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.78-86.

⁶ De Beauvoir, *La force de l'âge*, p.367.

safeguard the country from any potential attack. Stripped of its young men, coupled with a low demographic rate, victory had presented France with the impossible task of maintaining an influence beyond its means. Yet the growing audacity of Hitler was obviously compromising France's honour. Even the liberal thinkers Sartre and de Beauvoir recognised that Hitler had won too many concessions: "*«On ne peut pas céder indéfiniment à Hitler», me disait Sartre. Mais si sa raison l'inclinait à accepter la guerre, il se révoltait tout de même à l'idée de la voir éclater.»*"⁷ Daladier's government found itself in an impossible situation: to wage war would be to provoke those who wanted to avoid war at all costs and to avoid war was to provoke those who wanted France to stand up to Nazi Germany.⁸ De Beauvoir illustrates that even the same individual could simultaneously adopt these contradictory positions.

It appears that France was split down the middle in its desire to maintain peace and to maintain honour. Léon Blum, writing in the newspaper *Le Populaire* after the Soviet-German Pact, argued that those who wished to rid Europe of Hitler's malignant presence were just as numerous as those who opposed war:

*Le pouls de la nation ne bat pas un coup de plus à la seconde. Ce qui explique cet état de consensus étonnant et admirable, c'est que dans son immense majorité, l'opinion ne croit pas à la guerre, ou, pour parler plus exactement, elle ne considère pas la guerre comme une possibilité raisonnable. (...) Autant l'opinion est déterminée à tenir ferme contre cette entreprise de crime et de démente, autant elle a peine à y croire et elle n'y croit pas parce qu'elle ne comprend pas. Elle croit à la Paix, et la Paix ne signifie pas autre chose pour elle que l'arrêt des dictatures dans la voie fatale.*⁹

Diarists such as de Beauvoir, as the epigraph suggests, still held to the belief that peace could be maintained. One can detect in her writing a subconscious refusal to contemplate the possibility of war. In some instances, such pacifist feelings could even lead to a defeatist attitude where the negatives far outweighed the positives of war:

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.345.

⁸ Crémieux-Brilhac, vol.1 *La guerre oui ou non*, p.28. This is reflected in one of Daladier's speeches, which was made in response to one of Hitler's speeches. The speech, made in 1939, was the most bellicose speech made by a French leader since the First World War: *La France espère que la paix sera sauvée, car elle a la haine de la guerre. Mais si la guerre lui était imposée ou si elle lui était offerte comme la seule alternative entre la déchéance et le déshonneur, elle se dresserait d'un seul élan pour la défense de la liberté.*

⁹ Léon Blum, *Le Populaire*, (17 August 1939), Crémieux-Brilhac, vol 1. *La guerre oui ou non*, p.66, The Jewish Premier would be accused after the defeat of leading France into a war it did not want to fight.

*Les «défaitistes», quand ils se réunissent, s'interrogent d'abord prudemment, se donnant l'un à l'autre des gages, puis, rassurés, épanchent leur cœur. Le nom dont on les affuble est injuste: aucun Français ne désire la défaite de la France. Beaucoup croient à la victoire, mais puisqu'elle doit être lente et sanglante, ils ne la souhaitent pas... C'est le patriotisme qui les inspire: ils pensent simplement que la guerre longue abaissera la France plus que la victoire ne pourra la relever.*¹⁰

Georges Friedmann, in spite of his strong communist sympathies, represents very much the moderate view. He was clearly frustrated that France had placed itself in the impossible situation of defending its honour without waging war over Germany:

*J'écris ces réflexions parce que je viens d'entendre les plaintes, d'observer la misère de ces familles, déjà blessées, et qui se préparent à l'être encore. Ce ne sont pas des réflexions politiques, mais humaines. Si l'on se place du point de vue de la nation, que d'erreurs, que de crimes commis de tous les côtés pour conduire celle-ci, en vingt ans, d'une guerre à une autre, aujourd'hui, inévitable, nécessaire: car Hitler, maître de l'Europe, c'est la fin de la nation française, la curée sur son territoire métropolitain et son empire. Hitler vainqueur, c'est la ruine de tout espoir de redressement de la France, selon son génie, de tout renouveau librement jailli de ses forces profondes.*¹¹

Friedmann echoed the pacifist sentiment of de Beauvoir but where he differed was in his firm belief that war with Hitler was inevitable. What is clear is that the blame for this situation was directed squarely at the French governments during the inter-war period.

Diarists such as Georges Sadoul represent the other half of French opinion. Like Friedmann, he was a communist supporter who was convinced of the need to stop Hitler's aggression. He tended to concern himself, however, with the realisation of that goal rather than wondering how France had allowed itself to be placed in such a position. Writing his diary as a soldier on the frontline, he was certainly under no illusions as to the dangers of war. Yet he felt that this was obscuring the importance of why the French were at war: "*Songer que la guerre qui commence ne pourra être très différente de la dernière, voilà de quoi écœurer les délicats.*"¹² Sadoul felt that the overwhelming pacifist sentiment had made an adverse affect on military

¹⁰ Fabre-Luce, Alfred, *Journal de la France 1939-1944*, p.93, Crémieux-Brilhac, vol.1. *La guerre oui ou non*, p.148,

¹¹ Friedmann, Georges, *Journal de guerre 1939-1940*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), pp.169-170. (14.2.40)

¹² Sadoul, Georges, *Journal de guerre 2 septembre 1939 – 20 juillet 1940*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1994. 2^e éd.) p.30. (11.9.39)

propaganda, which implied that the costs of the imminent war would outweigh the reasons for it being waged:

On répète Nous n'avons pas voulu la guerre et nous la faisons malgré nous. Ce slogan est le contraire d'une bonne propagande puisqu'on peut en déduire que nous nous battons à contre-cœur et qu'on a tort d'agir contre son cœur... Certes, il est bon de dire que nous n'avons pas voulu la guerre, (ce que dit traditionnellement chaque belligérant), mais il paraîtrait normal d'ajouter que nous sommes résolus à la faire jusqu'au bout, jusqu'à l'anéantissement de l'Hitlérisme.¹³

Sadoul preferred to look at the war from the other side of the coin to Friedmann: the will not to lose face by backing down to Hitler ultimately outweighed the cost in human terms of fighting another war.

Others went even further in their condemnation of France. Bernanos believed that the refusal to fight was not only a slur against all those who had lost their lives fighting for the honour of France in the First World War but also a slur against France in general. France's submission at Munich in 1938, in his mind,

n'était qu'humiliante, accablante. L'ennemi n'était nulle part et se trouvait partout. La trahison n'avait encore ni nom, ni visage. Elle avait affaibli l'opinion française dans tous les secteurs, elle avait ruiné sournoisement les centres nerveux de peuple français. Sans doute la Presse – d'ailleurs presque tout entière à ses gages – faisait toujours beaucoup de bruit, mais c'était pour mieux couvrir l'effrayant silence de la nation qui ne croyait déjà plus en elle-même, se détachait lentement d'elle-même.¹⁴

Bernanos was so affected by this humiliating compromise that he left France for Brazil. France had preserved its freedom but the cost of that freedom was too much for him to bear. He believed that the cause of this humiliation was not so much a question of pacifism but one of social and political decadence. In this respect, he had an unlikely ally in Drieu La Rochelle:

Certes, cette guerre est mal emmanchée. Mais la France ne peut plus que mourir en combattant. Sa victoire serait si misérable. Ni elle ni l'Angleterre n'ont des idées vivantes pour refaire l'Europe. Leurs élites sont trop affaiblies pour donner forme à Genève, y mettre des idées saines et fortes.¹⁵

Although the two may well have differed on how this decadence had come about, they nevertheless agreed on the fact that France was in a state of rapid decline. Yet whereas Bernanos believed that pacifism was simply a symptom of France's

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.41. (23.9.39) The Jewish writer, Jean Malaquais (p.23) recorded a similar opinion from another soldier: «Si nous ne leur avons pas déclaré la guerre, j'aurais vomi sur la France!» (31.8.39)

¹⁴ Bernanos, Georges, *Lettres aux Anglais*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), p.25.

¹⁵ Drieu, *Journal*, p.86. (30.9.39)

decadence, Drieu was more aware of the role pacifism had played in France's decline:

*Si Mussolini marche avec Hitler, c'est que Staline n'est pas sûr. La réaction à tout cela des gens à qui l'on parle est lamentable: la catégorie de l'action a totalement disparu de l'esprit français. Ils ne peuvent même pas se représenter ce qui leur tombe sur la tête. Quant à imaginer des actions venant d'eux-mêmes...! L'idée d'entrer en Hollande ne s'impose pas à eux.*¹⁶

This refusal to make the first offensive move implies that only the defence of national soil would be tolerated. The pacifist undercurrent prevented any question of France initiating any military offensive. All faith was placed in France's ability to repel any German invasion of French soil. The strong pacifist sentiment would continue into the *drôle de guerre*, and the absence of fighting would only serve to strengthen that feeling. The young French girl, Frédérique Moret, illustrates how the refusal to accept the possibility of war had the potential to render oneself indifferent to war when it finally came:

*Je m'ennuie de mon pays sous la guerre. Je m'ennuie des nouvelles de la guerre. Je m'ennuie de la guerre, telle est la vérité. Il n'arrive rien, d'ailleurs. Ou c'est qu'il arrive des événements trop importants.*¹⁷

It took eight months for any fighting to take place and when that fighting finally eventuated it was over in six weeks. Neither aspect prepared the French for the fact that they were at war. All it encouraged was the desire for peace. The writer, André Thérive, would argue after the defeat that France had never been able to shake off its pacifism:

*L'armistice victorieux de 1918, je l'ai vu dans un hameau de l'Aisne, sans vin, sans eau non plus, et enveloppé d'un morne silence: on ne croyait presque pas à la paix, au bout de quatre ans. Cette fois on n'a jamais cru à la guerre. De là une atmosphère de liesse militaire, comme à la veille du départ de la classe.*¹⁸

The purpose of this section is not to illustrate how the pacifist attitude may have contributed to France's defeat but, rather, to situate the reader in the minds of the diarists in June 1940. Every diarist had at least expressed the need to stand up to Hitler. The fact that France's catastrophic defeat had left Hitler's advance in Europe

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.169. (9.4.40)

¹⁷ Moret, Françoise, *Journal d'une mauvaise Française*, (Paris: Editions de la Table Ronde, 1973), p.38. (26.5.40).

¹⁸ Thérive, André, *L'envers du décor 1940-1944*, (Paris: Editions de la Clé d'Or, 1948), p.8: (22.6.40) See also Bobkowski, p.32: *Aujourd'hui, j'ai compris que les particularités des Français, charmantes en temps de paix, et qu'on apprécie énormément, sont maintenant fatales. En temps de paix, ils avaient oublié la guerre; en temps de guerre, il leur a été impossible d'oublier la paix.* (24.6.40)

unchecked would have added to the diarists' humiliation. The armistice, however, had brought an end to the fighting, which would have inevitably been welcomed by a significant proportion of the diarists. The French government had failed to avert war but at least the lightning victory by the Germans had not prolonged the war.

The illusion of victory.

The relief over the end to the fighting felt by many diarists in June 1940 must also be tempered by the fact that the diarists had been almost unanimously confident in the superior might of the French military and its ability to prevail over Germany. It was as if they were bargaining on the fact that the Germans would not seriously contemplate entering another protracted, bloody war. Rist recorded the opinion of a German official, which seemed to confirm the German reluctance to wage war:

*le vice-consul de Dusseldorf [...] a franchi la frontière dimanche. Il raconte les choses les plus étonnantes sur l'état d'esprit en Allemagne. 85% des généraux sont contre la guerre, les industriels rhénans désirent la défaite. Les ouvriers lui remettent en cachette les plans des aérodromes, fortifications, etc.*¹⁹

After the defeat, Pétain would refer to *les mensonges qui nous ont fait tant de mal* but in reality they were for the greater part based on the truth. Some commentators in Berlin, for example, reported that morale in the last months of 1939 was much lower than what it was in France, and that Hitler would not remain long in power, as the only support for the Nazi regime and its expansionist policies came from the younger generation. Indeed, many of the German military chiefs were concerned about Germany's capacity to maintain a war machine with its lack of primary resources and the Allied naval blockade.²⁰

Such was the conviction observed by the diarists in France's military supremacy that some even entertained the hope that Germany would never go through with its bellicose intentions. Sadoul, for example, noted a conversation with a worker who had been mobilised:

¹⁹ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.36. (6-7.9.39)

²⁰ Crémieux-Brilhac, vol.1. *La guerre oui ou non*, p.338. See also Crémieux-Brilhac, vol.2. *Ouvriers et soldats*, p.425. From the French perspective, Daladier and Gamelin were sent reports on the morale of French soldiers ascertained from analysis of correspondence: *Le moral de l'Armée, dans l'ensemble, apparaît magnifique, avec une confiance quasi unanime dans les chefs, dans la ligne Maginot, dans notre matériel, la foi en la victoire finale et la résolution d'aller jusqu'au bout pour «ne pas remettre ça» à brève échéance.*

*Mais je suis sûr qu'il n'y aura pas la guerre. Tout cela, c'est de la frime. Par exemple, dans mon quartier, on a mis les gardes devant les centraux téléphoniques. Cela on le fait en cas de révolution, pas de guerre. Et puis je suis dessinateur dans la plus grosse fabrique de trains d'atterrissage. Jusqu'à il y a trois mois aucun de nous ne devait partir. On était tous affectés spéciaux [...] Eh bien, il y a deux mois, on nous a changé tous nos fascicules de mobilisation, et aujourd'hui plus de la moitié de l'usine est partie[...] Faudrait que le gouvernement soit fou pour faire des choses pareilles si l'on devait avoir la guerre. Non, je vous le dis, tout ça c'est de la frime, on n'aura pas la guerre....*²¹

War may have been declared but it was as if France had finally called Germany's bluff. The possibility that the war could resolve itself without any fighting taking place would persist right up until May 1940. There was certainly no concept in September 1939 of a humiliating defeat for France yet such sentiments would evidently contribute to the idea after the defeat that France had been betrayed by its leaders.

Pacifist sentiment and overconfidence appear to be intricately bound up with each other but ultimately the failure to take the threat of war seriously came from an inherent confidence in France's ability to withstand any invasion. While France had failed to come to the aid of Czechoslovakia, Finland, Norway and ultimately Poland, there was still widespread confidence that French soil was under no great threat. Friedmann confidently predicted in September 1939: "*Je suis convaincu qu'Hitler ne peut, en définitive, vaincre.*"²² In his mind, the Germans would inevitably secure victories in battles but ultimately France would prevail over Germany. Sadoul, listening to conversations in the mess tent, observed a similar opinion:

*Au mess des sous-offs, on a meilleur esprit. On pense que la France sera sans peine envahie, par la Suisse, jusqu'à Lyon. Mais nous aurons la victoire et nous annexerons toute la rive gauche du Rhin, Hollande comprise, nous rétablirons la Tchécoslovaquie, etc.*²³

Even the fascist sympathiser Drieu La Rochelle admitted that his memories of the way France's defences held during the First World War prevented him from imagining a rapid defeat: "*Après la Marne, je ne pus jamais de nouveau croire à la défaite. Aujourd'hui, je ne crois guère non plus à la défaite militaire, au brusque*

²¹ Sadoul, *Journal de guerre*, pp.16.17. (2.9.39)

²² Friedmann, *Journal de guerre*, p.49. (18.9.39)

²³ Sadoul, *Journal de guerre*, p.146. (5.3.40) The Maginot Line embodied the defensive attitude of France. It is significant to note the opinion that these defences were perceived as impregnable, which ultimately represented France's overall military capabilities.

effondrement – mais je sens plus que jamais la fin de la France.”²⁴ The imminence of war, when French troops moved into Belgium, did nothing to shake confidence in ultimate victory:

*Les Belges nous disaient: «Maintenant que vous êtes là, il nous semble que la guerre est terminée.» Nous acceptions les compliments avec un air modeste, mais satisfait. Je n’étais pas le dernier à être fier d’être le Soldat français, celui qui rouspète toujours mais qui est invincible. Ma figure comme celle des copains, semblait dire: «Vous allez voir ça!» Qui pouvait résister!*²⁵

In this respect, the individual’s past experiences were shaping the construction of that individual’s reality.

In the early hours of May 10 1940, the German forces began their offensive. Within a few days, they had made rapid advances into France. The diarists still continued to observe an undying confidence in the might of the French military. Sadoul, back from the front, observed in Paris:

*A Paris, qui est presque vide, tout le monde est très calme, très confiant. On demande à ce qu’on aille au plus vite bombarder les civils allemands, au besoin les femmes et les enfants; «faut leur rendre ce qu’ils nous font», dit-on souvent, disent aussi mes camarades. En général on ne craint nullement une invasion; «Paris, est simplement admirable», me disait ce matin mon beau-père au téléphone mais certains faits inquiètent Eli.*²⁶

The defensive mindset of both the military and the civilian population would have allowed for a certain instance of acceptance of initial German successes. Friedmann, who had also returned briefly to Paris, observed even near the end of May that confidence in ultimate victory had not dissipated:

*Le soir, parfois, entretiens avec le beau-frère du marquis, le comte de M., ancien ambassadeur à B., vieillard distingué et fin, plein de pondération et de tact dans ses jugements. Malgré les événements récents, il ne doute pas de la victoire. Et, son souci, en ce moment même, va déjà au problème de la reconstruction de l’Europe. «Comment procéderont-ils? Quelle tâche effrayante!» Nul de nous, à vrai dire, ne semble effleuré par la crainte d’une foudroyante victoire de l’Allemagne sur la France.*²⁷

²⁴ Drieu, *Journal*, pp.123-124. (6.12.39) Yet see p.501. He would later argue: *Je ne suis pas parti comme tant d’autres de l’idée de la défaite de la France; pour moi, ce ne fut qu’un fait significatif d’une situation beaucoup plus générale. La position dominante de la France en Europe était perdue depuis l’extension de l’Empire anglais, l’unité allemande, le développement de la Russie et des États-Unis. La nouvelle échelle des puissances nous reléguait au second rang.* Whilst such ideas were certainly espoused by individuals before 1940, the defeat served as a catalyst for the outpouring of resentment and disillusionment with France.

²⁵ Crozet, Louis, *Ni obéir, ni commander, ni combattre. Souvenirs militaires d’un mobilisé de 1939*, Crémieux-Brilhac, vol.2. *Ouvriers et soldats*, p.545.

²⁶ Sadoul, p.224. (25.5.40)

²⁷ Friedmann, pp.236-237. (29.5.40)

The civilians were prepared for protracted battles and a war of attrition but certainly not for a lightning defeat. Moret, who had been evacuated from her homeland in Sedan, was under the impression that the Germans were simply being led out from the forests into the open plains: “*L’autorité militaire commence à s’en inquiéter. Les réfugiés gênent les troupes montant au front. La population doit faire preuve de patriotisme et de discipline. Elle n’a rien à craindre. Si besoin était, on la préviendrait du danger.*”²⁸ The last sentence, however, is revealing in that it suggests that when the defeat finally dawned upon the French people, they would not be forgiving of the government, which, in their eyes, had done nothing to warn or help them.

Reynaud’s claim that *nous vaincrons parce que nous sommes les plus forts* appears to have cemented French confidence in the might and supremacy of the French military. This statement was much derided after the defeat, yet it did contain a certain truth in that the material and human resources of the Allies ultimately proved too much for the Axis powers.²⁹ What is important to realise, however, is that this was little comfort to the diarists in June 1940. They had not even been prepared for the possibility of failure, which would have no doubt compounded their despair and shame:

*«Nous vaincrons parce que nous sommes les plus forts». Les Français y croyaient. Les Allemands, eux, lisaient ce slogan comme «Dubo-Dubon-Dubonnet», et quand Hitler a dit, l’automne dernier et au printemps, qu’ils «se désagrègeraient tout seuls», la France a ri. Quand il a dit en avril que le 15 juin il serait à Paris, les rires ont repris de plus belle. Allez savoir si l’Etat-Major allemand n’a pas ralenti exprès sa marche sur Paris pour que les paroles du Führer se vérifient.*³⁰

The media had not given a heroic image of war as they had done in 1914, recognising the strong pacifist sentiment of the French people. They chose instead to emphasise the possibility of a miracle victory, where Germany would collapse rapidly and the war would be won without the need for fighting. This propaganda may well have had a calming effect on the diarists when war was declared in 1939 but it certainly had an

²⁸ Moret, *Journal d’une mauvaise Française*, p.35. (20.5.40)

²⁹ Crémieux-Brilhac, vol.2. *Ouvriers et soldats*, p.21. The eight months from September 1939 to May 1940 were not sufficient to organise and put to best use the complete resources of the Allies.

³⁰ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.101. (5.6.40) One might argue that the significance of Hitler’s predictions after the defeat was to further undermine the image of France and reinforce the dominance of Germany. See also p.15. (5.6.40) Bobkowski freely admitted that he had been convinced of France’s might. It appears that only Bobkowski’s wife, Basia, had predicted that Germany would crush France.

adverse impact on them in June 1940, after essentially the complete opposite had occurred.

History from above confirms this assumption that the threat of war was not taken seriously enough by the French government. This inability to fully appreciate the war is represented by France's rearmament programme. While Germany had begun rearming earnestly in 1934, France had only tentatively started in 1936 and only really got under way in 1937. Though Germany essentially restarted from scratch, France still had most of its impressive World War One artillery stocks intact, which may well have served to encourage the illusion of supremacy. As well as the time factor, France suffered a mental handicap, which aggravated the former. The French were deeply attached to peace and, moreover, assumed other countries shared their desire for peace. Few had understood the revolutionary and aggressive aspects of Nazism and even then it was thought that Hitler's aggression would be confined to Central Europe, as Hitler was always quick to point out that he had nothing against France. Moreover, the Maginot Line gave the illusion of security³¹ and together with the might of the French military the French could feel secure about any attack. What was more significant about the rearmament programme was not so much how late it was implemented but, rather, how it was executed. Up until the spring of 1938, and even as far as May 1940, the general conviction was that the rearmament programme was more of a precaution than a necessity.³²

What is important to remember is that the realisation that France was underprepared for war invariably came after the defeat. Marc Bloch, who served as a captain during the fighting in May and June 1940, experienced first-hand France's military failings. His private testimony of France's defeat, which he entitled *L'étrange défaite*, mirrors *Histoire* in that it was written after the event had occurred. He was convinced that France had been let down by its leaders, and that the French military had lost before the fighting had even started:

Beaucoup d'erreurs diverses, dont les effets s'accumulèrent, ont mené nos armées au désastre. Une grande carence, cependant, les domine toutes. Nos

³¹ See Sadoul, *Journal de guerre*, p.146. The belief was that Germany would attack through Switzerland in order to bypass the Maginot Line. The Franco-German border was considered to be impenetrable but there was no thought of Germany attacking through the Ardennes.

³² Crémieux-Brilhac, vol.2. *Ouvriers et soldats*, pp.10-11. It should be noted that the research of Robert Frankenstein (*Le prix du réarmement français 1935-1939*, notably p.222) shows that military spending from August 1936 to August 1939 accounted for 48 per cent of budgetary spending, which created massive budget deficits and compromised the improvement of social conditions. The problem was that France was preparing itself for war in order to avoid war.

*chefs ou ceux qui agissaient en leur nom n'ont pas su penser cette guerre. En d'autres termes, le triomphe des Allemands fut, essentiellement, une victoire intellectuelle et c'est peut-être là ce qu'il y a eu en lui de plus grave.*³³

Yet the diarists who had started writing before any fighting had taken place reveal that there was no concept of France being underprepared for war. They may well have expressed disappointment over the government's failure to avert war but they had every confidence in the might and supremacy of the French military. André Roussin, for example, who was mobilised after the declaration of war, held no doubts over France's ability to secure ultimate victory: "*Une phrase de mon journal m'a d'abord étonné puis fait sourire: «Tout cela ne peut finir que par une catastrophe pour l'Allemagne.» Puis, souligné: «J'en suis absolument convaincu.»*"³⁴ The illusion of victory leading up to the German offensive in May 1940, therefore, would make the diarists that much more vulnerable to the reality of defeat and that much more resentful to the previous government. It would be the previous government, rather than the military command, that would be blamed for France's lack of preparedness for war.

Quelle drôle de guerre!

The rude awakening in the spring of 1940 to France's ill-founded overconfidence in total victory was exacerbated by the period of inaction from September 1939 to May 1940, which was known as the Phoney War or *la drôle de guerre*. The diarists reveal that there was a subtle shift during this period from an aversion to war to an indifference to war. Consequently, they were simply not in the frame of mind for war when the Germans began their offensive in May 1940, least of all the lightning war that would see the total capitulation of the French army in little over a month. Maurice Toesca, a civilian living in Paris, observed that the months of inaction had the effect of anaesthetising the French with respect to war: "*L'esprit des soldats n'est pas à la bataille. Les alertes n'alertent plus personne. Personne ne veut croire à la guerre. On espère que «ça va s'arranger».*"³⁵ From a civilian perspective, it might be argued that initially there would have been relief that outright war had not

³³ Bloch, Marc, *L'étrange défaite*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1990) p.66.

³⁴ Roussin, *Rideau gris et habit vert*, pp.90-91.

³⁵ Toesca, *Cinq ans de patience*, p.34. (12.3.40)

come with the declaration of war. Yet as *la drôle de guerre* progressed, the idea of war became increasingly confused:

On vit un drôle de moment. Personne ne peut accepter la paix d'Hitler; mais quelle guerre va-t-on faire? Que signifie au juste le mot guerre? Il y a un mois, quand il a été imprimé en grosses lettres dans les journaux, c'était une horreur informe, quelque chose de confus, mais de plein. Maintenant, ce n'est plus nulle part, ni rien. Je me sens détendue et vague, j'attends, je ne sais pas quoi. On dirait que tout le monde attend. D'ailleurs, c'est ça qui frappe d'abord, à travers les livres de Pierrefeue, dans l'histoire de la guerre de 14: c'est une attente de quatre ans, coupée de massacres complètement inutiles; on dirait que c'est le temps qui travaille, et lui seul.³⁶

De Beauvoir inadvertently hints at the problems that the French civilian population would face during the Occupation. Though France would be spared four years of pointless massacres, the fundamental concept of *attente* would remain. This sense of waiting for history to take its course had already been experienced by the diarists during the Phoney War. It had the effect of disconnecting them from the events of the war and created the impression that the war operated in another dimension beyond their control.

The waiting for events to unfold also had the detrimental effect of creating doubt as to why war had been waged in the first place. Government reports from Vaucluse, Haute-Savoie, Allier and Rhône revealed three common reactions after the declaration of war:

– On ne peut plus être mobilisé tous les trois mois! – Il faut y aller, puisque Daladier dit qu'on ne peut pas faire autrement – Enfin, personne ou presque dans le peuple ne doute de la victoire, même si l'on effraie du prix qu'elle coûtera.³⁷

There was initially a clear determination to preserve France's honour by standing up to Hitler once and for all, and this was helped by a confidence in France's ability to get the job done. Yet it is interesting to note that the public needed to be told by Daladier that war was necessary, which indicates that there would be further repercussions for Daladier's government, given that it was perceived to be responsible for France getting involved in the war. The longer *la drôle de guerre*

³⁶ De Beauvoir, *La force de l'âge*, p.415. See also Roussin, *Rideau gris et habit vert*, p.87. For the military perspective, and Sadoul, *Journal de guerre*, p.89, (12.12.39) and p.87: *A quoi sert de s'exercer à faire la guerre, puisqu'elle est déclarée, mais qu'on ne la fait pas.* (12.12.39)

³⁷ Crémieux-Brilhac, vol.1. *La guerre oui ou non*, p.59. The American Henry Miller was struck by the mixture of resolution and the absence of bellicose rhetoric: *Ils parlaient de la guerre comme d'une tâche à accomplir, une corvée dont ils s'acquittaient sans discussion parce qu'ils étaient citoyens français. En vérité, ce qui comptait à leurs yeux, c'était le retour au foyer.* (Henry Miller, *Souvenirs, souvenirs*, Paris: Gallimard, 1953) The pacifist sentiment prevented any overt enthusiasm towards the war but the confidence in the French military encouraged a determination to get the job done.

went on, however, the more difficult it became for the diarists who had mobilised to accept or even entertain the possibility of war:

Plus que jamais en ce moment, sentiment de stagnation, d'attente. Ceux-là mêmes qui s'y refusaient le plus énergiquement commencent à admettre que ce sera une longue affaire. En ce cercle de médecins, dont plusieurs sont pleins de bon sens, les opinions, prévisions, interprétations possibles s'interfèrent, se croisent, s'échangent. Un thème affleure sans cesse dans les réflexions des anciens combattants de l'autre guerre: «En 1914, c'était plus clair.»³⁸

Friedmann observed that the initial resolve to stand up to Hitler had rapidly diminished over the harsh winter. The absence of fighting inevitably raised the question why had the French mobilised for war when the so-called enemy had not attacked? The more the Phoney War dragged on, the more their reason for being mobilised was undermined.

The perceived betrayal of the Russians, after the signing of the Russo-German pact of non-intervention, further contributed to this uncertainty. The communist sympathiser, Sadoul, remarked how just one month into the Phoney War, the media were determined to replace Germany with Russia as the real enemy:

Non, il n'y a pas, dans chaque journal, la défense de ce mot d'ordre très simple et qui devrait dominer toute la propagande: Hitler ennemi public no.1. Et, parce que, depuis trois semaines, ce mot d'ordre n'a été nulle part ni défendu ni développé, on entend le plus souvent, dans les conversations, dans la rue, dans le tram, au cantonnement, chacun s'inquiéter de l'attitude russe – ou s'en indigner. Tandis qu'au début de septembre chacun maudissait ce «cochon» d'Hitler et parlait de la nécessité d'en finir avec lui, une fois pour toutes. Non seulement cet état d'esprit n'a pas développé, mais il a été pratiquement détruit. La première chose pourtant, si l'on veut faire une guerre, me semble être d'expliquer aux soldats et au peuple qu'ils ont un ennemi à combattre.³⁹

This had the effect, in Sadoul's mind, of confusing *désirs et réalités*. In this case, many French believed that communism was the real threat so they constructed a reality where Hitler was not the main threat. One of the rare detailed observations of Rist during the Phoney War centred on this very issue:

Ce que l'avenir ignorera probablement, et ce qu'il faut retenir, c'est le rôle formidable que le conservatisme social, la crainte du communisme et du bolchevisme ont joué dans la politique étrangère de ces dernières années en

³⁸ Friedmann, *Journal de guerre*, p.180. (27.2.40) See also p.201. (10.4.40)

³⁹ Sadoul, *Journal de guerre*, pp.41-42. (23.9.39) See p.46 The media ignored the possibility that Russia had taken the bigger share of Poland so had, in turn, denied the Germans precious territory. Moreover, if France was supposed to protect Poland why did France not attack Russia as well? However, all good propaganda should not only manipulate public opinion but also respond to public sentiment.

*France et en Angleterre. Cette crainte obnubile des centaines de personnes, les rend incapables de saisir les événements autrement qu'à travers ce verre déformant. De là des sympathies cachées mais certaines à l'égard même de Hitler, de ses méthodes, de ses violences.*⁴⁰

In this climate of uncertainty, each individual's beliefs clouded their perception of reality. Sadoul and Friedmann, for example, believed that Socialism would triumph, whereas others, as Rist observed, preferred to believe that National Socialism could ensure the protection of bourgeois interests. The danger was that these often conflicting beliefs caused many to lose sight of the reason why France was really at war.

The more the Phoney War went on, the more it created a type of vacuum where the French were not only detached from the war but also made indifferent to it:

*On se lève vers 8h, on travaille un peu à des blockhaus et des arrangements de cabanes, on va chercher la soupe (le soir, en pleine nuit, c'est une drôle de corvée). Ça n'est pas du tout tragique, c'est moche, mais ce qu'il y a surtout, c'est qu'on n'arrive jamais à s'indigner vraiment (...) On ne sent vraiment rien (...) Je ne suis jamais triste et jamais fatigué (...), je suis simplement vide et abruti...*⁴¹

The feelings of lassitude and emptiness also hint at how the French would feel with the slow progression of the Occupation years.⁴² The feeling of being in another dimension to the events slowly occurring around them is crucial in understanding the lethargy and apathy of opinion throughout the Occupation. Furthermore, as Sadoul comments, the absence of action was no preparation for the lightning war that ensued, which would have only served to compound the debilitating effect of defeat:

*Huit mois de fausse guerre ont démoralisé les troupes endormies dans le repos, le tirage-au-cul, l'ennui, la saoulerie. Après quatre jours à peine de vraie guerre, les joueurs de belote et les champions de football ont vu les chars foncer sur eux, les avions les mitrailler en rase-mottes. Ils n'ont pas tenu le coup.*⁴³

It would also have the effect of intensifying the desire for an end to be brought to the fighting.

⁴⁰ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.37. (8.9.39) Rist was targeting this fear of communism at the bourgeois elite, who feared revolution and the eradication of their interests.

⁴¹ Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Les carnets de la drôle de guerre novembre 1939 – mars 1940*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), p.200 (22.12.39)

⁴² Claude Barrois, David Marlowe, Louis Crocq, Walter Reed and Franklin Jones in *Psychiatrie des guerres à faible intensité de combat*, International Congress of Psychiatry, (Vienna, 1983), argued that this type of *réaction nostalgique* is symptomatic of wars with low levels of combat action. Crémieux-Brilhac, vol.2. *Ouvriers et soldats*, pp.432-433. The same could apply to the Occupation years where the French had been removed from the fighting.

⁴³ Sadoul, *Journal de guerre*, p.207. (18.5.40)

Part Two

The impact of *la débâcle* and the defeat

*Ce qu'il y a d'affreux dans la situation actuelle, c'est l'invraisemblable soudaineté avec laquelle elle s'est produite. Du jour au lendemain, nous avons dû passer de la plus grande confiance dans une résistance invincible au fond de l'abîme le plus profond de la défaite. Nous avons encore de la peine à croire à la réalité.*⁴⁴

Effondrement: militaire et civil.

The diarists' reaction to the emphatic, rapid nature of France's military defeat must be understood within the context of their previous mode of thinking. They had overwhelmingly believed in the supremacy of the French military but, as the epigraph illustrates, they had no time to alter their thinking. The fighting was over too soon to appreciate that the French military had simply been outperformed by the German military. Rist noted that the defeat had left the French paralysed by the events of the war. Their state of shell-shock would temporarily blind them from the reality of defeat. The majority of the diarists were not directly exposed to the fighting but it is interesting to note that even the diarists who were fighting on the frontlines reveal very little of the actual fighting in their diaries. Instead, they emphasised the chaos caused by the lack of governmental organisation, as opposed to the panic inspired by the rapidly advancing Wehrmacht. The armistice would encourage the perception that the military *débâcle* had at least been brought to an end whereas the legacy of the civilian *débâcle* would endure well beyond the cessation of hostilities. The emphasis on the civilian *débâcle*, therefore, would have the effect of accentuating the sense of being betrayed by the government and downplaying the role of the military command in the defeat.

It was not so much the fighting that haunted the civilian population but, rather, the fear of being caught up in the fighting. Werth, on leaving Paris for Saint-Amour, had been initially surprised at how orderly and calm the people were: "*il n'y a point*

⁴⁴ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.79. (4.7.40)

encore de mauvaise humeur ni même d'impatience."⁴⁵ Yet with the slow progress and the imminent fall of Paris, there would be a rapid deterioration: "*Ces gentilles, ces complaisances, elles auront demain disparu.*"⁴⁶ The French civilian population may have been forgiving of early failures to withstand the German invasion but by June it became increasingly apparent that the cause was lost, and that there seemed little point in holding out as long as possible. Moret, for example, who had maintained the hope of victory in May, had adopted a defeatist attitude by June:

La radio annonce ce matin que les alliés ont demandé l'intervention des Etats-Unis, sinon ils capitulent. Chantage ou sincérité désespérée? Ce peut être encore la guerre ou la paix. Mon Dieu, que ce soit la paix!"⁴⁷

There was no Gaullist suggestion that the battle was lost but not the war. The desire for peace, shared by many citizens, removed any consideration of what the cost of that peace might be. The fall of Paris would spark the growing sentiment that it was pointless to continue the battle:

Qu'est-ce qui se passerait si les Allemands se mettaient à bombarder les réfugiés? Quel massacre! Pourquoi continuer maintenant que Paris est pris. C'est plus la peine de se battre. Qu'est-ce qu'ils attendent pour faire la paix, tout de suite!"⁴⁸

As the French soldiers retreated further into France, the civilians became increasingly apprehensive that they would be brought into the fighting. It is no coincidence that the word *tranquille* figures widely among the diaries. In essence, this was the motivation for the Exodus: the search for *tranquillité*. This desire to be sheltered away from the effects of war had little or no concern for the needs of the nation: "*Tout ce que je souhaite, c'est de retrouver au plus vite ma femme et mes gosses, et de recommencer avec eux ma bonne petite vie tranquille, est la phrase qui revient le plus souvent dans les conversations.*"⁴⁹

It could be argued that the *exode* swelled to such an extent that it exerted a greater influence on the diarists than the fighting itself. Historians agree on a figure between eight and ten million people, along with hundreds of thousands from

⁴⁵ Werth, *33 jours*, p.14.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.16.

⁴⁷ Moret, *Journal d'une mauvaise Française*, p.48. (14.6.40)

⁴⁸ Sadoul, *Journal de guerre*, p.325. (14.6.40)

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.387. (28.6.40) See also p.299 (9.6.40), p.384 (25.6.40) and pp.36-37 (18.9.39) This search for *tranquillité* did not end with the signing of the armistice. It would continue throughout the Occupation. See Werth p.322, *Déposition*, (17.7.42): *Paysans ou marchands, ils souhaitent le départ des Allemands et la réalisation d'un idéal petit-bourgeois, une vie tranquille*. See Bernanos, *Lettre aux Anglais*, p.45. *Certain bourgeoisie, en 1914, comme en 1940, les hommes dont je parle eussent volontiers sacrifié la grandeur à la sécurité, inventé une France agricole, pacifique et réactionnaire, où ils pussent espérer vivre enfin tranquilles, à l'abri des troubles sociaux.*

Belgium and Luxembourg, who were caught up in the Exodus of May and June 1940. That is almost a quarter of the population, which is even more significant when one realises that most of the refugees came predominantly from the north-east of France. In fact, nearly half of the inhabitants from those regions fled from the German forces, and in many places close to the Belgian border, both rural and urban, the inhabitants were entirely evacuated.⁵⁰ One is struck with the sense of terror and panic amongst those fleeing and the absence of any consideration other than their own safety. They had no destination in mind other than to head south away from the fighting:

*Les Parisiens, maintenant, partaient à pied. Un vieillard poussait avec difficulté une charrette à bras contenant des oreillers, une petite fille et un vieux chien qui hurlait désespérément. Boulevard Raspail, un interminable courant de réfugiés s'écoulait... L'épicier du coin de la rue du Contentin abandonne sa boutique sans même fermer les portes... Ce n'était plus le départ, c'était la fuite... Des dizaines de milliers de personnes se massaient encore autour de la gare de Lyon, bien qu'on y racontât que les trains ne partaient plus... La radio transmettait des messages et des appels contradictoires: tantôt l'évacuation de la population était assurée, tantôt les Parisiens devaient rester chez eux et garder leur calme.*⁵¹

These feelings are significant as they imply a desperation to see an end to the fighting, which explains the French people's favourable response to Pétain's call for an armistice. That the hero of Verdun should call to lay down arms was not worthy of consideration. All that mattered was that he was proposing a way out to the French people, which they had been blindly hoping for. It was not simply a matter of putting an end to the fighting but also to the civilian chaos caused by the fighting. The lack of preparation and direction from above created the impression that one no longer belonged to a national or local community. Furthermore, the Exodus created a sense of dislocation. Werth remarked on his journey to Saint-Amour: "*Je pleure sur la France, dans un paysage que je connais pas, qui n'est pas de ceux que j'ai appris à aimer, un paysage plat avec excès de ciel.*"⁵² Those fleeing their homes were exposed to different parts of France, which may well have been unfamiliar to them. Moreover, their welcome may well have been an unwelcome one due to the growing supply problems. It is understandable that they should feel a stranger and that their thoughts were of home and of their family. Werth, for example, had left his wife Suzanne in

⁵⁰ Rajsfus, Maurice, *Les Français de la débâcle : juin-septembre 1940, un si bel été*, (Paris: Cherche midi, 1997) p.37.

⁵¹ Ehrenbourg, Ilya, *La nuit tombe*, p.342 and Audiat, Pierre, *Paris pendant la guerre*, pp.11-12, Rajsfus, *Les Français de la débâcle*, pp.43-44.

⁵² Werth, *33 jours*, p.67.

Paris, and he had received no news of his son Claude. In addition, he had to come to terms with the fact that the Germans had occupied his country. He often observed German soldiers playing games, singing, or sunbathing and kept repeating to himself: “*Je ne suis plus en France.*”⁵³

The increase in refugee numbers, particularly in June, provided significant logistical problems for those regions receiving the swelling refugee numbers. Although nearly a quarter of the population was directly involved in the Exodus, there were few parts of France that were not indirectly affected by the arrival of so many refugees. The feeling that the national and local governments had abandoned the French in their hour of greatest need only served to accentuate the feeling of desperation, and created the impression that the French were unable to restore order by themselves. The question on everyone’s minds was when would this chaos end?:

*Les gens du Limousin ou du Poitou, qui ont déjà vu passer les Lorrains, en septembre, les Belges, en mai, et les premiers flots des Parisiens, y ont usé leur pitié. Ils opposent maintenant aux arrivants des visages fermés. Les affamés qui demandent toujours la même chose, toujours ce qui manque – du pain, de l’essence – finissent par les exaspérer... La querelle monte vite. Les réfugiés appellent sur le village, la famine, les bombes, toutes les calamités dont ils semblent propriétaires.*⁵⁴

The lack of sympathy for the distress of refugees and the feelings of resentment towards them hardly did anything to encourage a strong feeling of fraternity amongst the French.⁵⁵ It encouraged, instead, a culture of selfishness where the individual’s needs were placed highest, and everyone else was perceived as competition for scarce resources.⁵⁶

Moreover, not only was there a culture of selfishness but there was also one of mistrust. The notion of a ‘fifth column’ had encouraged the idea of an enemy within before the war:

La panique gagnait le peuple en marche. Trop de voitures criblées de balles, trop de cerveaux encore hallucinés par la vision de colonnes de réfugiés mitraillés par d’énormes avions glissant au ras des arbres... Ce n’était plus le sentiment d’une migration mais celui d’une impitoyable catastrophe... La moindre lueur de phare provoquait des colères hystériques. Ces salauds

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp.68-69.

⁵⁴ Fabre-Luce, Alfred, *Journal de la France, mars 1939 – juillet 1940*, (JEP, 1941), pp.336-337. See also Toesca, *Cinq ans de patience*, p.50. (7.6.40)

⁵⁵ See Friedmann, *Journal de guerre*, p.244. (30.5.40)

⁵⁶ Sadoul, *Journal de guerre*, p.323. (13.6.40) Diarists, such as Sadoul, did seem genuinely concerned for those caught up in the exodus but the problem appeared so great as to be almost unbelievable.

*vont nous faire repérer, ne sont-ils pas de la Cinquième colonne? C'est la troisième fois qu'ils rallument, ils font des signaux...*⁵⁷

Inevitably such a swift and emphatic defeat would cause the French nation to internalise the defeat. The enemy within, as opposed to Germany, was the real culprit. The Vichy regime was quick to point out that there was both a good and bad France and that its aim was to root out and eliminate the latter. Werth observed a nation, shamed by defeat, but eager nonetheless to find a culprit:

*«Nous sommes vendus, nous sommes trahis...» Cette accusation populaire, que j'ai depuis si souvent entendue sur la route, il semblait qu'elle se suffit à elle-même. Je n'ai jamais obtenu de réponse à la question: «Par qui?...» Mais il y a un sens populaire de divination qui dépasse les tâtonnements de la critique.*⁵⁸

Such a statement allows a certain freedom to lay the blame on whoever or whatever the people wanted. This may well have differed from one individual to another but the important thing to consider is that this blame was never attributed to Pétain. Vichy, therefore, was absolved from any responsibility for the situation in which France found itself. The thought that France had been betrayed from within was perhaps more of a comforting thought than entertaining the idea that France, as a whole, was to blame for the defeat.⁵⁹

It is clear in many diaries that the blame for the defeat was principally apportioned to the previous government. Sadoul observed during the Exodus a complete lack of organisation from above as well as a complete lack of authority and direction:

*Une femme m'interpelle. Je lui réponds. Elles sont bientôt trente réfugiées à m'interpeller, à me demander conseil, parce que je suis un homme, que j'ai un uniforme, et que depuis des heures elles n'ont trouvé personne à qui s'adresser, ni un garde-mobile, ni un garde-champêtre, ni un agent, ni même un conseiller municipal. Où allaient donc les gardes-mobiles en pullman? Et les flics à roulettes de la police parisienne, dont les vélos nous ont dépassés, un peu avant Sully? Les pompiers sont partis avec leurs pompes, les agents avec leur autorité et leurs matraques, mais nulle part sur les chemins de la retraite, quelqu'un pour éteindre les incendies ou organiser la circulation aux carrefours.*⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Serge, Victor, *Les Derniers Temps*, p.137, Rajsfus, *Les Français de la débâcle*, p.36. See also Sadoul, *Journal de guerre*, p.42. (23.9.39)

⁵⁸ Werth, 33 jours, pp.28-29. See Sadoul, *Journal de guerre*, p.367 *Trahis, nous sommes trahis*. (17.6.40) Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, pp.101-102. (12.9.40)

⁵⁹ See Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.123. (17.9.40)

⁶⁰ Sadoul, *Journal de guerre*, p.351. (16.6.40)

Although preparations had been made for the evacuation of civilian populations in the north-east of France, the confidence in France's ability to repel any German invasion appears to have caused a complete lack of preparation for the possibility of a wider successful German invasion. Sadoul entered a town where women asked him for advice, as his soldier's uniform represented to them some sort of authority, but were too demoralised to heed his warnings:

*Je suis pris de panique... Que faire pour ces malheureux? Je tourne la tête. Mon convoi est en train de filer. Je cours pour le rattraper sur la route où il s'engage. C'est moins un départ qu'une fuite. Honte de cette totale désorganisation. Une once d'autorité suffirait à aiguiller sur les forêts proches, où elles ne risqueraient rien, ces femmes folles de terreur...*⁶¹

Such conspicuous disorganisation would have only served to encourage the idea that France had been betrayed. Vichy was only too willing to exploit such a climate of suspicion and mistrust, and would place the blame entirely on the previous Republican regime.

The individual testimony of Bloch, written after June 1940, represents this desire after the defeat to go beyond the failings of the French military. Although Bloch had been directly involved in the fighting, he was more concerned with why France had been defeated rather than how it had been defeated. He was certainly under no illusions that the blame for the defeat lay squarely on the shoulders of the military command: "*en un mot, parce que nos chefs, au milieu de beaucoup de contradictions, ont prétendu, avant tout, renouveler, en 1940, la guerre de 1915-1918. Les Allemands faisaient celle de 1940.*"⁶² Yet it must be said that the civilian population had also envisaged fighting in terms of the First World War. Bloch believed that the foundations of the defeat had been laid well before May 1940. His perception that the French forces had been outnumbered illustrates his belief that France had not just been shown up on the battlefield:

Cette guerre accélérée, il lui fallait, naturellement, son matériel. Les Allemands se l'étaient donné. La France non, ou, du moins, pas en suffisance. On l'a dit et redit: nous n'avons pas eu assez de chars, pas assez d'avions, pas assez de camions, de motos ou de tracteurs et, par là, nous avons été empêchés, dès le principe, de mener les opérations comme il eût convenu de le faire. Cela est vrai, incontestablement et il n'est pas moins

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp.352-353. (16.6.40)

⁶² Bloch, *L'étrange défaite*, p.84.

*certain que de cette lamentable et fatale pénurie, les causes ne furent pas toutes d'ordre spécifiquement militaire.*⁶³

Such a view would have been encouraged by the military command's overestimation of the German forces. History reveals that this overestimation was politically motivated rather than militarily motivated, as it is no coincidence that the defeatist supporters of 1939 were the most vocal supporters of the National Revolution and even collaboration. The military leaders wanted to be seen as the ones responsible for revealing the sins of the nation rather than being targeted as the problem itself.⁶⁴

The sense of betrayal and chaos would be so great that not only the appointment of Pétain as the leader of a new regime would be welcomed. Some even went so far as to welcome the German military presence in France. Werth remarked how some French were fooled into thinking that the Germans were also providing protection and maintaining order. He visited a farm where he encountered a Parisian who was also caught up in the Exodus:

*Je ne répéterai ses propos parce qu'ils expriment le renoncement total, qui, chez une partie des Français, suivit la panique, parce qu'on y découvre cette brutale oscillation de l'émotion de peur à l'illusion de la sécurité. Ils craignaient que les Allemands ne tuent tout, en passant. Ils ont la vie sauve. Ils ont fait «Ouf» et ils ne savent même plus s'ils sont désespérés ou satisfaits. Cet homme ne conte point avec simplicité son exode, son aventure personnelle. Il y a dans ses paroles de l'étonnement et de la colère: «A Ozouer, on a trouvé les Allemands... Ils nous ont donné une chambre». (Il n'ajoute pas que le village était à peu près vide et que les Allemands y étaient peu nombreux). «Ils nous ont donné une chambre et ils nous ont donné à manger, le midi et le soir... Les Français n'en ont pas fait autant.»*⁶⁵

What the French craved after the trauma of defeat was a sense of order and security. The young girl Frédérique Moret, who had witnessed the unruly behaviour of the French soldiers during the Phoney War, had no faith in their abilities to restore order and guarantee people's protection:

Sedan est pris! Les Allemands sont chez nous, dans mon pays, dans ma maison. Eh bien, je m'en fous. Ils ne seront toujours pas pires que la drôle

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp.81-82. Later, he would acknowledge in a footnote: *Je me rends compte mieux aujourd'hui que ce matériel, certainement insuffisant, ne manquait cependant point autant qu'on l'a dit. Il manquait sur le front. Mais nous avions, à l'arrière, des chars immobilisés dans les magasins et des avions qui ne volèrent jamais. Les uns comme les autres, parfois, en pièces détachées.*

⁶⁴ Crémieux-Brilhac, vol.1. *La guerre oui ou non*, p.121. See also vol.2. *Ouvriers et soldats*, pp.167-168, for additional statistics concerning French and German forces. History reveals that the lack of French armour was illusory, born from the overestimation of German armour. What was different was how the Germans used their armour.

⁶⁵ Werth, *33 jours*, p.96. See also p.135: *je commençais seulement d'apercevoir, chez quelques Français l'évanouissement de toute pudeur nationale ou l'agenouillement devant une figure supposée de l'ordre, de l'ordre dans l'absolu, de l'ordre qui ne tient compte d'aucune résistance humaine.*

*d'armée de la drôle de guerre. Ils ne pourront pas être plus sales. Ils ne pilleront pas davantage.*⁶⁶

Such an attitude had the danger of encouraging acceptance of the German military presence in France. The Germans could be seen to be providing a service, which masked the true nature of their military presence in France.

Shame or relief?

Many diarists observed that the relief over the signing of the armistice superseded any feelings of shame over the defeat. Indeed, there was an acceptance of defeat even before the signing of the armistice or, at least, an awareness that the French had reached their breaking point. Sadoul kept on hearing remarks from people fleeing Paris:

*«Va falloir apprendre à marcher au pas de l'oie» ou «Est-ce que ma chemise kaki va pouvoir servir de chemise brune?» Que dira-t-on quand on saura la prise de Paris? Il ne suffit pas que le gouvernement veuille continuer la lutte, il faut aussi que ses troupes, que le pays tout entier le veuille. Et je crois bien que personne n'en veut plus ou n'en peut plus.*⁶⁷

Friedmann argued that after the armistice there was an unwillingness to own up to what had happened to France. He believed that too many were taking the soft option of believing that peace had granted France the blessing of no longer needing to think about the war:

*Aujourd'hui, chez beaucoup de Français, je ne trouve pas l'expression de la douleur devant le malheur de la France: mais, à travers ces villages, ces villes, ces cantonnements du Limousin, du Périgord et de la Guyenne, chez trop de civils et de militaires de l'exode, je n'ai discerné, dans ces journées d'un été parfaitement pur, qu'une sorte de détente satisfaite (et parfois presque épanouie) dans l'animale conscience de savoir que «pour nous, c'est fini»... et l'inconscience de tout le reste.*⁶⁸

It is significant to note that these regions were situated outside the Occupied Zone, which would have encouraged the idea that the armistice had gained a certain kind of victory for these regions. There appeared to be no consideration of those regions which did remain under German control. Yet even within the Occupied Zone, the Germans were keen to stress the fact that the war was over for the French. A German

⁶⁶ Moret, *Journal d'une mauvaise Française*, p.31. (15.5.40)

⁶⁷ Sadoul, *Journal de guerre*, p.325. (13.6.40) See also p.354: *Je m'en moque, dit l'un d'eux très fort, d'une voix qui chante, je m'en moque que nous soyons Français ou Boches, pourvu qu'on fasse la paix aujourd'hui...* (16.6.40)

⁶⁸ Friedmann, *Journal de guerre*, p.307. (28.6.40)

soldier remarked to Jean Malaquais: "*Nous sommes tous des frères; et vous, les Français, vous avez de la chance: pour vous la guerre est finie...*"⁶⁹

This illusion that life could continue as normal after the signing of the armistice would be first promulgated by the French soldiers. This illusion was created by their inability to see past the defeat. Jünger invited some captured French officers to dine with him and his soldiers, and noted their overwhelming acceptance of defeat:

*Ces hommes fatigués étaient visiblement dans l'état de dormeurs qui voient un affreux cauchemar prendre tout à coup une tournure favorable. [...] La plupart de ces hommes étaient déjà complètement émoussés. Ils ne posaient que deux questions: Leur donnerait-on à manger? La paix était-elle signée? Je fis répondre que Pétain avait proposé un armistice. L'armistice était-il signé? L'incalculable valeur de la paix apparaissait ici à l'évidence.*⁷⁰

Inherent in this overwhelming desire for peace is the belief that peace would see their lives return to normal. They had no concept that the war would continue and that Germany would require their labour to maintain its war machine. They were simply focused on escaping the fighting and allowed that to blind them to any contemplation of the future:

*Entendant des gars pérorer haut et clair que la libération de tous et de chacun ne fait pas un pli, que c'est affaire de formalités, de convois, qu'ai-je besoin d'y mettre mon grain de sel? «Mais, les potes, ai-je dit à peu près, vous prenez vos désirs pour des réalités. La guerre n'est pas finie, loin s'en faut. La défaite de la France n'est qu'un épisode dans la partie de brigandage en cours. Plus le Reich étendra ses conquêtes et plus il aura besoin d'esclaves pour faire tourner sa machine de mort. Alors, là, nous autres, ses prisonniers, en fait de libération, il nous fera pisser le sang, et pas chez toi, dans ton bled, mais outre-Rhin, et pendant des années encore...*⁷¹

It appears that many did not comprehend that the military *débâcle* would have serious, enduring repercussions for France.

The situation was not helped by the fact that no one could tell what was going to happen next. Paris had been occupied before by foreign military forces: the Prussian occupation, after their victory in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, being the most recent example. The First World War had also seen the German occupation of

⁶⁹ Malaquais, *Journal de guerre*, p.181. (27.6.40) See also Friedmann, p.203.

⁷⁰ Jünger, *Jardins et routes*, (Paris: Christian Bourgeois Editeur, 1979) pp.204-205. (18.6.40) See Rajsfus, *Les Français de la débâcle*, p.64. It would be wrong to think that the French soldiers facing the German soldiers chose to flee rather than fight. In less than six weeks, there were more than 92 000 killed, or 2 000 killed on average each day, which was higher than the average of 900 during the First World War. Although some soldiers exploited the exodus and joined the civilian masses, a much more significant number were taken prisoner

⁷¹ Malaquais, *Journal de guerre*, p.188. (2.7.40)

territories in the north-east of France. Yet the occupation of almost two-thirds of France was unprecedented. Consequently, the armistice⁷² provided no clear assurances as to what the future would hold for France: “*Armistice – armistice... J’essayais d’appréhender le sens de ce mot, la signification, la portée, hâtivement, fébrilement, comme pour déjouer un piège mortal. – Il faut, il faut, me répétais-je, il faut... Je ne savais pas ce qu’il fallait.*”⁷³ Before the signing of the armistice, there was the perception that France was like a sinking, rudderless ship. The notion of Pétain acting as a shield against the Germans dispelled this notion. Yet even more importantly, Vichy’s inception was marked by perhaps its most telling achievement: the restoration of peace. Its motives were simply not questioned. Sadoul observed a crowd of civilians and soldiers listening to de Gaulle’s speech:

*Il est très dur pour le gouvernement Pétain, dit que l’armistice qu’il va signer est une faute contre l’honneur et les intérêts suprêmes du pays, qu’il placera la France sous la dépendance de l’Allemagne. Il appelle les officiers, les soldats, les spécialistes à passer en Angleterre pour continuer la guerre. Ce discours est mal accueilli. – Vas-y te battre, eh, salaud! T’as le cul dans ton fauteuil et tu veux que les autres se fassent encore tuer. Tu peux toujours courir! Ce sont les soldats qui parlent, mais les habitants et les réfugiés les approuvent. La troupe et les civils en ont assez. Ils veulent la paix à tout prix.*⁷⁴

The consequences of the armistice were irrelevant to a nation stunned by defeat. The only thing that mattered was restoring peace. There was certainly no desire to prolong the suffering of those perceived to have been betrayed by the previous government.

The acceptance of the armistice by the French people, however, must be qualified. Did it also mean that the French were prepared for a political regime under German supervision? This question seems much more difficult to answer. From an historian’s perspective, it appears that the regime starting to emerge in Bordeaux and then Vichy was less important, for the majority of the French population, than the certainty of the need for the return to peace and the hope of a speedy return of the prisoners of war. How many were actually interested in the actual clauses of the

⁷² Goutard, Colonel A., *La Revue de Paris*, (October, 1960), pp.79-95. It must be noted that the armistice of Compiègne was not in effect an armistice. An armistice implies a cease-fire, a temporary halt in fighting but not the surrendering of weapons to the enemy. The term capitulation is more appropriate, as articles four and five saw the handing over to the Germans of virtually all of France’s war material, including that of the Unoccupied Zone.

⁷³ Malaquais, *Journal de guerre*, p.168. (19.6.40)

⁷⁴ Sadoul, *Journal de guerre*, p.378. (23.6.40) See also Roussin, *rideau gris et habit vert*, p.101: *Encore un général, d’ailleurs! On venait de voir de quoi ils étaient capables, le généralissime en tête! Celui de Londres n’était-il pas aussi un médiocre qui se croyait le plus fort? Son ton même, de mauvais acteur de l’Odéon, le rendait suspect. Et qui était-il pour se permettre d’insulter le sacro-saint vainqueur de Verdun qui venait de faire à la France le don de sa personne?*

armistice rather than the general fact that the fighting had stopped? How many realised that aside from the capitulation of the army and the handing over of all of France's war material to the Germans, the armistice also called for French 'collaboration' with the German military authorities?⁷⁵ All that was certain to the French was that they had been taken out of the fighting. The diarists reveal that the individual had withdrawn from the national community and was no longer concerned with public interests. Peace had been obtained and the consequences of that peace mattered little: "*Le journal est arrivé à l'heure habituelle, il annonce officiellement l'armistice, et en détaille les conditions. Mme F. a rompu la bande et, après un coup d'œil discret, replié les papiers: "Je lirai ce soir, si j'ai le temps."*"⁷⁶ The illusion of normality had returned to France: in Paris the metro started running again, the newspapers reappeared, the cinemas, theatres and music-halls reopened and the race courses as well as other sporting events were hugely popular again.

It is important to remember that the conditions of the armistice created different experiences for the French. There was no homogeneous experience of the Occupation in France. Even within a particular zone, different regions or different occupations exposed individuals to different experiences. Jean Guéhenno, for example, living in occupied Paris, refused to give in to German propaganda and believe that the war was over or that life had returned to normal. Swastikas were draped over public buildings and the French tricolour was taken down, German street signs were set up alongside French signs, and German defensive positions were set up at different strategic points in the city. The notion that the French had become prisoners under the Germans was that much more palpable:

*Je pense à toute la jeunesse. Il était cruel de la voir partir à la guerre. Mais est-il moins cruel de la contraindre à vivre dans un pays déshonoré? Je ne croirai jamais que les hommes soient faits pour la guerre. Mais je sais qu'ils ne sont pas non plus faits pour la servitude.*⁷⁷

The cessation of hostilities was no consolation for Guéhenno. The war had merely assumed another form.

Edmond Duméril, on the other hand, was prepared to acknowledge the German presence in France. Duméril, who spoke fluent German, believed that something positive could be taken out of this enforced partnership with Germany. His daily

⁷⁵ Rajsfus, *Les Français de la débâcle*, p.95.

⁷⁶ Thérive, *L'envers du décor*, p.8.

⁷⁷ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.15.

contact with the Germans inevitably coloured his view in terms of his reaction to the defeat:

*Enfin, Dieu soit loué! le massacre des troupes en déroute et des civils en fuite est arrêté! Le royaume de l'Esprit et de la charité demeure! La force brutale aujourd'hui triomphante, s'effondrera, et l'heure de la Vraie Paix viendra un jour. Heureux qui n'a pas vécu ces heures tragiques! Que de ruines il faudra relever!*⁷⁸

Yet Duméril was conscious of the fact that the armistice was only a temporary measure and peace had yet to be restored to France. Although he was a self-confessed Germanophile, he certainly did not embrace the German military presence in France. Werth, on the other hand, encountered another Germanophile, Madame Soutreux, whilst on his way to Saint-Amour. He was incredulous that this woman freely offered her German hosts a glass of champagne, and justified their occupation of France.⁷⁹ One could never say that Duméril shared such a defeatist attitude but, rather, believed that something positive could be taken out of France's shameful defeat. It seems only natural that those who could speak German should feel some sympathy towards Germany. The problem was knowing how far to go. It was clear that, in the eyes of Werth, Madame Soutreux had gone too far:

*Nous acceptons comme des prisonniers acceptent leur pitance. Car chez la Soutreux, il est évident que nous ne sommes pas en France. Nous ne sommes pas non plus tout à fait en Allemagne. Nous sommes dans un pays, que nous ne savions pas exister: une France qui accepte la victoire allemande ou s'en réjouit, une France qui ne se sent liée à aucune coutume ou qualité française. Nous regardions cette femme avec stupéfaction. Nous ne savions pas. Et nous nous demandions si elle appartenait à la «cinquième colonne».*⁸⁰

It could be argued that those living in the Unoccupied Zone would have had more cause to be grateful for the armistice in that they would have been more inclined to think that they were no longer involved in the war. André Roussin, for example, who had been demobilised, was too caught up in the realisation that Marseilles would be untouched by the German advance:

Marseille avec son effervescence naturelle et l'invasion brusque de Parisiens de toutes sortes refoulés par l'exode – mais sains et saufs – connu dans les jours qui suivirent l'armistice une animation particulière. Après les grandes peurs le rire devient nerveux. Il y eut à Marseille cette exagération

⁷⁸ Duméril, *Journal d'un honnête homme pendant l'occupation*, p.26.

⁷⁹ Werth, *33 jours*, pp.58-60. One is reminded of Chardonne's notorious novella, *L'été à la Maurie*, where the German officer, von Ebrennac, is offered a glass of cognac in good faith by a French vineyard owner.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.71. The notion of an enemy within was particularly prevalent in the summer of 1940.

*dans la joie d'une vie retrouvée. Ville libre, zone libre... Tout ce qui restait tragique dans le reste de la France semblait presque oublié ou du moins ne plus concerner ceux que le sort gratifiait de ce ciel bleu et de cette apparente liberté. La vie reprit furieusement.*⁸¹

The illusion of normality blinded him to the fate of others less fortunate in the Occupied Zone. There was no consideration of the German military presence in France, given that his own corner of France was unaffected by the German occupation. His relief, therefore, shielded him from the shameful defeat:

*Je négligeai donc le général de Londres et ne me souciai guère du maréchal de Vichy. Je retrouvais la vie, c'était pour y faire du théâtre. Je l'écris loyalement: je ne voyais pas en quoi la guerre me concernait encore. L'euphorie de Marseille à cette époque dut fortement peser sur mon état d'esprit. Je laissais d'autres en toute bonne foi jouer les David face au Goliath hitlérien, s'ils étaient assez utopiques pour croire à leurs chances.*⁸²

The Unoccupied Zone was sheltered initially from the consequences of the defeat. Even Werth, who would vociferously come to challenge the acceptance of defeat expressed by many living in the Unoccupied Zone, acknowledged how one could view the defeat purely in military terms:

*Je me rends compte que je n'avais pas encore cru à la totalité de la défaite. J'y croyais comme à une maladie dont on a peur et dont au fond de soi on écarte la possibilité. Chacun de ces Allemands, c'est le signe d'une maladie dont on a lu la description, mais que soudain on découvre en sa peau.*⁸³

The fact that the Germans stayed out of the Unoccupied Zone meant that its inhabitants were not reminded of France's affliction. Similarly, Bobkowski observed on his cycle tour of the south of France that the war had made little or no impact on the locals: "*Il y a eu la guerre, elle continue, mais pour eux, c'est comme si elle était déjà finie; elle n'est d'ailleurs jamais arrivée jusqu'ici. Ils n'ont pas changé.*"⁸⁴ Perhaps because Werth's thoughts were often of his family and friends in Paris meant that he was unable to ignore the wider ramifications of defeat. He despaired at how often he encountered the acceptance of defeat among the French and their overwhelming passivity. Certainly, he acknowledged that it took time to fully appreciate the *totalité* of the defeat. Events had transpired so quickly after months of inaction. Yet he was astounded to observe the reaction of a family in Saint-Amour, more than a month after the signing of the armistice, who had not only accepted the defeat but also consigned it to the annals of French history:

⁸¹ Roussin, *Rideau gris et habit vert*, p.99.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp.101-102.

⁸³ Werth, *33 jours*, pp.68-69.

⁸⁴ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.39. (28.7.40)

*J'avais toute raison de supposer qu'en ce milieu conservateur et patriote, on serait accablé par le malheur de la France, que du moins on ne l'accueillerait pas paresseusement comme un effet de telle politique ou de la fatalité. Tous, vieux et jeunes, s'apitoyèrent sur nos maigres repas, nos fatigues et nos risques pendant l'exode. Mais notre étonnement devant la débâcle leur parut un sentiment préhistorique. Notre tristesse leur fut étrangère. Ils avaient accepté l'événement, comme s'il appartenait à la plus vieille collection de faits historiques. Ils manifestaient seulement leur satisfaction de ce que la petite ville, près de laquelle ils habitent, n'ayant point résisté aux Allemands, n'avait pas été bombardée.*⁸⁵

The national disintegration of France.

The palpable relief in June 1940 that the fighting was over could not hide the nagging question over the ensuing months: how had France fallen so far so quickly? Bloch, in his concluding lines of *Examen de conscience d'un Français*, claimed: "*Quel que puisse être le succès final, l'ombre du grand désastre de 1940 n'est pas près de s'effacer.*"⁸⁶ The relief over the cessation of hostilities would only last a certain amount of time, given that an armistice implied that terms of peace would soon be dictated to the French. There was no concept that the armistice would lay the foundations for the entire Occupation period. Nor did every diarist comprehend straight away that whilst the French had been taken out of the fighting, the defeat had not taken them out of the war. When Galtier-Boissière was asked when he would restart the newspaper, *Crapouillot*, which he had edited before the war, he replied that he would do so after the war. He noted the confident reply that the war would be soon over, and the style of Galtier-Boissière's diary would suggest that this opinion, although not his own, represented a significant proportion of French opinion:

*Mais la guerre est finie, l'Europe va se faire! Vous avez un rôle à jouer; la réconciliation franco-allemande ouvre des perspectives magnifiques. Ce sont nos rêves enfin réalisés, à nous autres pacifistes! La guerre n'est pas finie. Phh! les Allemands seront à Londres dans quinze jours. Weygand le disait déjà il y a deux mois...*⁸⁷

It would take time for all the diarists to awake to the reality of defeat. The defeat, as Bobkowski emphasised, was not the cause of France's decadence but, rather, a symbol of how decadent France had become:

⁸⁵ Werth, *Déposition*, pp.40-41. (Fin juillet 1940) See also *33 jours*, p.133.

⁸⁶ Bloch, *L'étrange défaite*, p.207.

⁸⁷ Galtier-Boissière, *Journal*, p.13. (26.8.40)

Pourquoi donne-t-on toujours (le plus souvent), comme exemple de la culture d'un peuple, la culture qui a vu son déclin? Il est faux que les cultures déclinent sous l'effet des coups extérieurs. Elles déclinent d'abord d'elles-mêmes. Les coups extérieurs ne sont que des coups de sicaire barbare. La culture et la civilisation de notre époque me font penser à un fou qui aurait découpé des vieux journaux en morceaux sur lesquels il aurait écrit «un million de dollars» et qu'il aurait ensuite rangés dans son portefeuille, convaincu d'être riche.⁸⁸

Bobkowski admitted that he had been convinced of France's grandeur before the war yet the defeat opened his eyes to the true decadent nature of France. What he found disturbing was not so much the defeat but, rather, the fact that the French themselves had not recognised this deterioration in their own country. They too had been caught up in the myth of France and the defeat served to expose that myth. Bobkowski, in his conversation with a baker, disagreed with her harsh view of the character of French men but conceded:

Mais la boulangère a raison quand elle dit qu'avant la guerre on ne racontait aux Français que des balivernes. On leur clamait sur tous les tons que «la nation française [était] une forteresse de culture», «le berceau de la grande philosophie», «l'esprit français invincible», etc., en citant à l'appui Descartes, Voltaire, La Révolution, Napoléon et Louis XIV, pour finir par Foch et Lyautey... Tous les Français étaient convaincus de leur grandeur. Ils avaient l'impression que Molière et Racine étaient morts la veille, que tout était formidable, et ils dormaient sur les deux oreilles en jurant leurs grands dieux que c'était vrai. Ils nourrissaient le monde de leur grandeur réchauffée. Mais manger sans arrêt des plats réchauffés a de fâcheuses répercussions sur la santé.⁸⁹

The process of national disintegration had begun well before the defeat of 1940. It was just that the diarists had mostly been concentrating on the upcoming war rather than the domestic problems afflicting France. Drieu was an exception to the rule, in that he had detected France's decadence before the defeat:

Cet abandon de tout le peuple à la superstition russe est le signe le plus certain de notre abâtardissement à tous. Quand un peuple n'a plus de maîtres, il en demande à l'étranger. Cependant que d'autres Français s'abandonnent à l'attente clandestine de l'Allemand. Quant à la masse, elle est vouée aux Anglais. Il n'est plus de Français pour ainsi dire qui pense et qui veuille français. La veillesse française est entièrement partagée entre le parti du centre ou anglais, le parti d'allemand d'extrême droite et le parti russe d'extrême gauche. Il y a aussi tous ceux qui veulent qu'on leur foute la paix, c'est-à-dire qu'on les recouvre comme d'une déjection.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.61. (27.8.40) See also Werth, p.67. (21.10.40)

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.101. (12.9.40) See also p.83. (8.9.40)

⁹⁰ Drieu, *Journal*, pp.123-124. (6.12.39) See also pp.129-130. (15.12.39) Bernanos was also aware of France's decline before the defeat. See p.36, *Lettre aux Anglais*, (Paris, 1946).

Drieu was also unconsciously foretelling how the French would react after the defeat. It was not so much the divisions themselves that were the real problem but the fact that they all signified an abandoning of France for foreign ideas. The problem was that the defeat ensured that the hitherto gradual awareness of French decadence was brutally exposed to every French citizen. The diarists may well have gone into the war with little enthusiasm but they were certainly confident in their chances of victory. When the French army was shown to be woefully unprepared to combat a modern fighting force it was inevitable that the diarists would focus on why rather than how their army, with its proud history, should have been so emphatically routed.

The defeat, in military terms, could have been explained by the inferior numbers at the French military's disposal – even though History reveals that this disparity was for the greater part illusory – but there was no excuse for France's lack of preparedness or its incapacity for modern warfare. Gide did not have the privileged position of Bloch on the battlefield yet it is significant to note that he too was under the impression that France had fought a hopeless battle against insurmountable odds. Consequently, he was less concerned with how France had been defeated than why it had been defeated, which was also, coincidentally, the position of Vichy:

*Sans doute n'y a-t-il aucune honte à être vaincu lorsque les forces de l'ennemi sont à ce point supérieures, et je n'en puis éprouver aucune; mais c'est avec une tristesse sans nom que j'entends ces phrases où viennent s'épanouir encore tous les défauts qui nous ont perdus: idéalisme vague et stupide, méconnaissance de la réalité, imprévoyance, insouciance, et croyance absurde en la valeur de propos fiduciaires qui n'ont plus crédit que dans l'imagination des niais. [...] A la lueur tragique des événements est apparu soudain le délabrement profond de la France, que Hitler ne connaissait que trop bien. Partout incohérence, indiscipline, revendication de chimériques droits, méconnaissance de tous devoirs.*⁹¹

The implications for France, as a nation, were not at all favourable. It would have the effect of lessening the impact of the German presence in occupied France in that France was seen as the real cause of its own demise and, significantly, the France of pre-1940. It was not the leaders of Vichy, therefore, who were sought out as culprits but, rather, the leaders of the Popular Front governments of the 1930s.

The defeat had been humiliating for France but equally humiliating, if not more so, was the fact that France had deteriorated to such an extent that it found itself in a position to be defeated so emphatically:

⁹¹ Gide, *Journal*, p.28. (14.6.40)

«La France..., la France seule», disent-ils. Hélas! Je doute qu'il y ait en elle de quoi remonter la sinistre pente. En sa jeunesse, peut-être; mais elle est par trop divisée. L'état de délabrement où nous sommes, et que notre défaite a si tristement révélé, m'affecte bien plus encore que la défaite même.⁹²

Inevitably, the crushing defeat crushed with it any feelings of confidence or self-worth among the French. Rist had been aware of the harmful effect of the bourgeois fear of communism before the defeat but after the defeat he feared that there was another more prevalent issue:

Humiliation enfin pour ceux qui savent la vraie cause de cette affreuse défaite: la paresse, la routine, la suffisance de ceux qui avaient la mission d'organiser sa défense, leur ignorance criminelle de ce qui se préparait à côté d'eux; même paresse, même routine dans tous les domaines, civil ou militaire, industriel ou agricole. Méconnaissance totale des conditions nouvelles de la vie moderne. Est-ce le signe d'une irrémédiable décadence? Faut-il vraiment désespérer?⁹³

The diarists Mauriac and Guéhenno, who both wrote clandestinely for underground publications, were well aware of the temptation to give in to feelings of despair and resignation, which would prevent any rebuilding of France as a nation. They were intent on spreading the message that to give in to such feelings was to betray France:

La pire des défaites pour les Français serait d'avoir honte de la France. Péguy, à qui on ne pense pas sans douleur aujourd'hui, disait magnifiquement qu'il y avait quelque chose de pire que «l'invasion militaire, barbare, et de servitude», c'est, ce serait «la plus dangereuse des invasions, l'invasion qui entre en dedans, l'invasion de la vie intérieure infiniment plus dangereuse pour un peuple qu'une invasion, qu'une occupation territoriale».⁹⁴

To accept defeat and to accept the German military presence in France was to abandon all hope in the rebuilding of France.

The German invaders were not perceived as the real problem; the real enemy was within. This is significant as the defeat was internalised and saw the French turn on themselves. Every diarist agreed that France had a serious problem and that the problem was France's problem alone. Guéhenno preferred to ignore the German military presence and focused instead on the weakness of France:

Le vrai drame de la France, ce n'était pas tout ce qui, de l'extérieur, la menaçait. Son péril, ce n'était ni le chancelier Hitler, ni M. Mussolini. Le mal était en elle-même; c'était cette crise de confiance qu'elle traversait, cette peur d'être soi. Les jeunes garçons français, à les considérer

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.76. (6.5.41) Gide had considered the fall of France well before this date. See, for example, p.56. (24.9.40)

⁹³ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.88. (4.8.40)

⁹⁴ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.21. (5.7.40)

*individuellement, étaient aussi actifs, aussi intelligents que jamais. Mais il leur manquait cette sorte d'unanimité dans l'espoir et le songe qui est le signe de santé des peuples. Que les fêtes pour le cent cinquantième anniversaire de la Révolution ne fussent que des commémorations funèbres révélait cette faiblesse et cette atonie.*⁹⁵

The problem was that different people had different ideas as to what that *mal* entailed and which groups were responsible for that *mal*. Stanley Hoffmann argued that Vichy was not a simple revenge of the reactionary right but a 'pluralist dictatorship' where different ideologies tried to stamp their mark on Vichy policy.⁹⁶ Everyone was certain that there was a problem within France but there was great uncertainty and confusion as to what that problem actually was. Such confusion was exploited by Vichy, which was quite clear in its targeting of who was to blame. Vichy was quick to identify the undesirable elements in France, which had no place in its desire for a France of rootedness and regions. The pillar communities of family, workplace and region held up the national community and the Jews, Freemasons, Communists and foreigners undermined these foundations. Exclusionary laws were among the first measures undertaken by the Vichy regime, many of which had precedents dating back to the 1930s.⁹⁷

The question facing the diarists was whether France had the ability to regenerate itself on its own or whether it needed external help. Drieu was one of those diarists who had openly criticised the decadent state of France in the 1930s. He held a notion of France in the wider European scheme of things rather than as an independent nation. He believed that France alone had nothing to offer and though he did not believe that France would be defeated, least of all in such an emphatic manner, the defeat would have only served to confirm his conviction that Germany needed to inject some life into France. During the *débâcle* he observed:

Cette torpeur qui règne à Paris, qui s'est manifesté à l'occasion du bombardement no.1. J'avais raison de dire il y a quelques années que les Français étaient devenus un peuple triste, qui n'aimait plus la vie. Ils aiment la pêche à la ligne, l'auto en famille, la cuisine, ce n'est pas la vie. Ils ne sont pas lâches, mais pires; ils sont ternes, mornes, indifférents. Ils souhaitent obscurément d'en finir, mais ne feront rien pour que ça aille plus

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.48. (20.9.40)

⁹⁶ Hoffmann, Stanley, *La Droite à Vichy*, in *Essais sur la France. Déclin ou renouveau*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1974) pp.17-41.

⁹⁷ Jackson, Julian, *France the dark years 1940-1944*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) pp.150-151. At the end of 1940 the internment camp stood at about 55 000 to 60 000. These were French camps that had nothing to do with the Germans, many of which dated from the late 1930s.

*vite. Cette 9e armée qui s'en va les mains dans les poches, sans fusils, sans officiers.*⁹⁸

Drieu was very clear on why this indifference was so prevalent. The decadence of France had prevented the French from thinking of more noble concepts:

*La France meurt d'avarice dans tous les ordres de sentiments et de pensées. Pays de petite ironie, de petit dénigrement, de petite critique, de petit ricanement, pays de petitesse. Tout y a été abaissé: les institutions et même leurs pauvres contraires. Si on a abattu la monarchie on n'a pas élevé le peuple, si on a avili l'aristocratie on n'a pas décanté la bourgeoisie, si on a ravalé le clergé on n'a pas défendu les professeurs contre l'insipide vanité et on les a loués dans leur inénarrable vacuité. La fraternité n'a pas remplacé la charité, l'égalité n'a profité qu'à l'argent, quant à la liberté ce ne fut que la basse licence de dire tout de façon que rien ne tirât plus à conséquence.*⁹⁹

There was no sense of *grandeur* but, instead, the feeling that a once proud nation had been reduced to *petitesse*. Drieu did not hide his belief that the values and institutions of the Republic were responsible for this *petitesse*. He was not the only observer to express regret over the weakening of structures that had been so strong under the monarchy. Drieu never went so far as to take joy in France's humiliation and the fall of the Republic like Charles Maurras, who called the defeat a 'divine surprise'. Despite his fascist leanings, Drieu was a Germanophobe and so, in this respect, he was in tune with the opinion of Raymond Aron: "*Il m'est arrivé par instants de penser, peut-être de dire tout haut: s'il faut un régime autoritaire pour sauver la France, soit, acceptons-le, tout en le détestant.*"¹⁰⁰ There were many bourgeois, however, who shared the mentality 'the Republic is dead: we have won'. The implication of such a feeling is illustrated by Galtier-Boissière. He recorded an old man's opinion on the organisation of Europe:

*Cet effondrement a révélé chez nous une décomposition effroyable, et telle qu'on ne peut vraiment entrevoir le moyen de nous relever. L'annexion de notre pays par l'Allemagne serait peut-être la solution la moins fâcheuse pour nous, d'autant que l'Allemagne seule serait capable de mettre un peu d'ordre dans ce chaos. Une fois disparus de la carte d'Europe, personne ne pourra se gausser de notre décadence.*¹⁰¹

Not only was there a desire for Germany to instil some order and strength in France but there was an acceptance that the price for this would be the loss of France's independence, indeed, France itself. Whilst this is an extreme view, and one shared by Drieu, it is significant to note that it was being considered at all. The

⁹⁸ Drieu, *Journal*, p.235. (5.6.40)

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.238. (8.6.40)

¹⁰⁰ Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy*, p.61.

¹⁰¹ Galtier-Boissière, *Journal*, p.14. (End of September 1940)

enforced cohabitation of France and Germany would put forward this question of nationality to the French and not just those of fascist tendencies would have to show where their loyalties lied. Drieu leaned towards the extreme right but his view of France was very similar to many other diarists whose views were less extreme. Where he differed from the other diarists was his solution for France.

The refusal to accept the defeat required common values, a feeling of national fraternity and faith in an eventual victory for Britain. The divisions that had so affected France during the 1930s prevented this from happening. The common feeling in 1940 was that France and the French had nothing to offer. Guy de Pourtalès remarked in Switzerland:

*Nous avons à peu près les mêmes réactions: étonnement attristé du retournement subit après l'armistice, fin du libéralisme traditionnel, guerre aux Juifs; Pétain a tout misé sur la carte allemande, se croyant certain de la voir gagner. Et voici qu'on se demande: gagnera-t-elle? Ramuz m'a dit cette triste parole: "Je ne reconnais plus le visage de la France."*¹⁰²

These divisions were not a new phenomenon born out of the defeat. The defeat merely brought them out into the open. The despair in France's decadence and the special circumstances of the *débâcle* encouraged a wholesale abandoning of France for foreign ideas and protection. Just after the declaration of war in 1939, Raymond Queneau's *Un rude hiver* was published, which seemed to anticipate the events of 1940. A lieutenant reveals to a German spy:

*Eh bien, monsieur Frédéric, vous savez ce qu'il faudrait pour sauver la France de la décrépitude et du désordre? Vous ne le savez pas? Non? Eh bien moi je vais vous le dire. Il faudrait un protectorat allemand sur la France, voilà ce qu'il faudrait.*¹⁰³

This bears a remarkable resemblance to a woman's opinion Werth encountered in June 1940: *Elle nous rassure d'ailleurs sur le sort de la France: "«Ce sera un protectorat, comme le Maroc... On ne sera pas plus malheureux, on travaillera comme avant...»"*¹⁰⁴ The acceptance of France's fate and the indifference to its demise is what Werth in particular could not comprehend. The events of the *débâcle* certainly consolidated this acceptance of the Germans – they were seen as the only ones capable of restoring a sense of order – but they also forced the French to think back as to how these events were allowed to happen.

¹⁰² Pourtalès, p.441. (19.10.40) Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1995) pp.38-40. See also Vallotton, Annie, & Vallotton, Gritou, *C'était au jour le jour Carnets (1939-1944)* (Editions Payot & Rivages, 1995), pp.96-99.

¹⁰³ *Un rude hiver*, (Paris, 1939), pp.132-133. Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*, p.53.

¹⁰⁴ Werth, *33 jours*, p.86.

It would be wrong, however, to think that these pre-existing divisions were a sign that 1940 was merely a continuation of the 1930s. There were exceptional circumstances that also need to be considered to fully understand why so many were inclined to reject the notion of an independent France. For a start, the France after June 1940 bore no resemblance to the France before the armistice. There was no unified France but at least six segregated Frances and these divisions respected no previous administrative boundaries. Firstly, there was the Unoccupied Zone, which covered 45 per cent of metropolitan French territory and comprised about a third of the population. Secondly, the tiny Italian Zone, which would be extended after 1942. Thirdly, Alsace and Lorraine would be effectively annexed by Germany. Fourthly, the two *départements* of the Nord and Pas-de-Calais were attached to the German military command in Brussels. Fifthly, the forbidden zone, which ran from the mouth of the Somme in the north down to the Swiss frontier in the Jura, was separated from the Occupied Zone and refugees were not allowed to return there. Lastly, there was the Occupied Zone, which would incorporate the Unoccupied Zone in November 1942. One must also take into account the 1.5 million prisoners of war, which added to the feeling of dislocation. There were, therefore, not only political and social divisions but also physical divisions. Bobkowski reveals the destructive nature of these different divisions:

*L'important, c'est qu'on puisse dire et, plus important encore, qu'on puisse écrire que le gouvernement Pétain s'attaque à la reconstruction du pays. Les gens y croient, comme ils croient que la zone libre est effectivement la France libre, alors qu'il est difficile d'imaginer d'effet plus destructeur que cette partition du pays en deux. Ce faisant, les Allemands ont partagé non seulement la France, mais chaque Français.*¹⁰⁵

The fighting may have stopped but the Occupation was, nevertheless, a brutal intrusion into French territory. Not only were new laws and regulations enforced upon the French people but also a change in thinking and behaving. Postal correspondence throughout France was only by special postcards until June 1941, which could only indicate a very restricted amount of information.¹⁰⁶ Free correspondence only came about in March 1943. The population of the Nord and Pas-de-Calais felt entirely cut off from the rest of France and workers there were drafted

¹⁰⁵ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.112. (15.9.40)

¹⁰⁶ See Werth, *Déposition*, pp.90-91: *Si aucun Français n'avait consenti à utiliser ces cartes, je ne dis pas que les troupes allemandes auraient passé le Rhin. Mais nous eussions remporté la seule victoire qui nous fût possible. Nous eussions déconcerté l'ennemi autrement qu'en fuyant sur les routes.* (13.11.40)

right from the outset to work in Germany. Alsace and Lorraine became completely German, and it was illegal to speak French or express one's French culture. Those who tried to escape the compulsory Wehrmacht service had reprisals exacted on their families.¹⁰⁷ It is important to remember, however, that these changes were not evenly experienced by the diarists. Conditions in the two main zones were very different. The Occupied Zone, for example, was on German time and one hour ahead of the Unoccupied Zone until all zones were on German time after May 1941. In the North, the swastika flew from buildings but it was the French flag in the South. The impact of seeing the swastika fly from buildings in the Occupied Zone is aptly illustrated by Toesca, writing from Paris:

*Le cœur serré, nous assistons au décrochage de l'emblème qui était notre garant, qui représentaient pour nous la liberté non seulement de vivre, mais de penser. Pour moi, ce sera désormais comme si je portais autour du cou le nœud coulant d'une corde prête à être serrée.*¹⁰⁸

The feeling of captivity was inescapable in the Occupied Zone. In the South, however, all outward signs would point to the fact that France's sovereignty remained intact. A curfew was imposed in the North from 10pm to 5am but not in the South. Newsreel propaganda was also markedly different. In the Occupied Zone, cinemas had to show German newsreels. Much time was devoted to anti-British propaganda and news about the war, whereas in the Unoccupied Zone the outside world was largely absent. Spain and Switzerland seemed to be the only other countries ever mentioned. One would have difficulty in knowing a European war was taking place as the Vichy newsreels depicted a peaceful, rural France, with much time devoted to Pétain and the Empire.¹⁰⁹

These regional differences are well documented in the private diaries during the crucial first months of the Occupation. Bobkowski, on his travels by bicycle around the south of France after the armistice, noted that the illusion that the war had changed nothing for France lingered on much longer in the Unoccupied Zone. He noted in the middle of September 1940:

La patronne nous a gâtés: déjeuners et dîners de cinq plats, 14 francs, vin compris. A chaque repas j'avais l'impression non seulement de déjeuner,

¹⁰⁷ Jackson, *The dark years*, pp.246-248.

¹⁰⁸ Toesca, *Cinq ans de patience*, p.63. (18.6.40)

¹⁰⁹ Jackson, *The dark years*, pp.255-256. Radio Paris was innovative and more popular than the stuffy, unimaginative Radio Vichy.

*mais aussi de manger les restes... de la France. Au café, je n'arrêtais pas de me dire que c'est trop beau pour que ça dure.*¹¹⁰

There is, however, a hint at the problems which would eventually affect all of France. This plentiful bounty in the South would certainly not last the entire Occupation. Bobkowski was right to be concerned about the future. Roussin, on the other hand, allowed his relief to cloud his vision of the future.¹¹¹ This would inevitably colour his view of France and, moreover, his attitude to the Germans and to Vichy, which had kept the Germans out of the South. Duméril on the other hand, working alongside the Germans in Nantes in the Occupied Zone, was made very aware through his job of the consequences of the German presence. The cafes closed at six o'clock, the post offices closed well before and the telephone connections were closed in the afternoon. Marks had to be accepted at an inflated value and there were German signs everywhere.¹¹²

It would be impossible, therefore, to talk about French opinion on a national level and think that there was a national consensus. Certainly History from above is aware of regional variations but it is more concerned with detecting general trends rather than accentuating differences. These differences are what the private diaries provide yet they too are aware of general trends, albeit in a personalised sense. With regard to the first months of the Occupation, it is important to bear in mind these differences. For example, the north-eastern *départements* were the only parts of France which had been occupied during the First World War and, therefore, they were the only ones where there was any concept of what occupation entailed. They were traditionally anti-German and Anglophile. They also had an engrained suspicion of southerners and the temptation for them was to see the armistice as a means of avoiding occupation in the South. That is not to say that they forged a unified regional identity, as the Popular Front governments had exacerbated class tensions in this highly industrialised region with its ultra-conservative *bourgeoisie*.¹¹³ Yet compared with other regions, particularly in the South, their history made them more predisposed to react unfavourably to the German occupation. Mauriac wrote in *Le*

¹¹⁰ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.120. (17.9.40) See Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.94. Food restrictions were introduced on September 19th 1940 by the Germans: occupied countries had to have 30 per cent less rations than the Germans.

¹¹¹ Roussin, *Rideau gris et habit vert*, p.99. But see p.112. Roussin went to Switzerland to put on his play and noticed the contrast between genuine freedom and the so-called *zone libre* of France.

¹¹² Duméril, *Journal d'un honnête homme pendant l'occupation*, pp.27-28. (19.6.40)

¹¹³ Jackson, *The dark years*, pp.248-249.

Figaro just after the armistice: “*Les Français du Nord, dont les maisons furent détruites en 1914 et en 1940, je croyais les plaindre. Aujourd’hui seulement, je comprends: leur douleur nous restait étrangère.*”¹¹⁴ It is understandable that those who had been unaffected by the German invasion were oblivious to the pain of those who had been directly affected.

Werth observed too often a meek acceptance of France’s situation. He argued that for the French citizen:

*L’univers entier se bat pour lui ou contre lui. Mais il ne participe pas à cette bataille. L’histoire se fait pour lui comme pour les autres, mais elle se fait sans lui. L’événement vient au Français, mais il ne va pas à l’événement. Il lui reste un pouvoir, un droit: celui de faire des vœux. Il peut pratiquer toutes les vertus de l’homme intérieur, dans la mesure où l’homme intérieur est immobile et muet.*¹¹⁵

He met a wife of a prisoner of war, who asked him what would become of France: “*Qu’est-ce qu’on va devenir? Les Anglais, les Boches...*”¹¹⁶ Such a question is significant, as it was a sign that the French were not thinking of themselves in terms of a nation but, rather, as in the first example, as individuals. The upheaval of the civilian *débâcle* and the consequences of the armistice appear to have engendered an inability on behalf of the French to have any concept of France as a *patrie*. Werth, on the other hand, refused to renounce his French nationality: “*Je tiens à une civilisation, à la France. Je n’ai pas d’autre façon de m’habiller. Je ne peux pas sortir tout nu.*”¹¹⁷ Yet he was only too aware that the uncertainty of the period and the uncertainty over what direction Vichy was taking would undermine national solidarity. He cited a passage from de Vigny’s *Servitude et grandeur*, which, one infers, had clear parallels for Werth with the France of 1940:

Hélas! dis-je, milord, il y a des temps où l’on ne peut pas aisément savoir ce que veut la Patrie... à ces signes funestes, quelques étrangers nous ont crus tombés dans un état semblable à celui du Bas-Empire, et des hommes graves se sont demandé si le caractère national n’allait pas se perdre pour toujours.»¹¹⁸

The overwhelming passivity of the French is, in part, explained by this inability to think in terms of France. It was as if France no longer existed, or had temporarily vanished and the only available options were to side either with Germany or Britain

¹¹⁴ Mauriac, François, *Journal du temps de l’Occupation*, in *Œuvres Complètes: Tome XI*, (Paris: Fayard, 1952), p.308, (23.6.40)

¹¹⁵ Werth, *Déposition*, p.51. (3.10.40)

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.65. (17.10.40)

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* (21.10.40)

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.41-42. (6.9.40)

or indeed to side only with oneself. It was as if France had not only been taken out of the fighting but also taken out of existence. Talking to a doctor, Werth entertained the idea of whether France still existed:

*«La France est décomposée...» me dit-il. Et vous entendez bien qu'il ne donne pas à ces mots le sens que lui peuvent donner les moralistes de Vichy. Dans une société aux mœurs effrangées, sans morale dominante et donc sans hérésie, il ne voit plus que des hommes dénoués, sans lien avec la société, sans lien avec eux-mêmes.*¹¹⁹

His friend Lucien Febvre, an historian who had also escaped to Saint-Amour from Paris, expressed a similar opinion: *“La France est foutue. [...] Jugements bien différents en leurs attendus, mais identiques. Si la France est foutue, je ne m’y résigne pas. J’étais habitué à elle.”*¹²⁰ This was the crux of the problem: the perception that France was finished encouraged resignation amongst the French to its fate. Germany had not only emphatically defeated France but it had also revealed how decadent it had become. What was the point of uniting with other French citizens if many of them were responsible for France’s weakened and decadent state? Rist felt that the only option left to the French was to wait:

*Les gestes du gouvernement de Vichy ont quelque chose d’irréel. La vérité est ailleurs. Ces fantoches n’ont aucune prise sur l’opinion et les sentiments. On regarde l’avenir – c’est là qu’est la réalité. L’impression que nous vivons dans une parenthèse (horrible sans doute, mais simple parenthèse). On vous dit: oui, les Anglais, c’est très bien, mais pourront-ils réellement vaincre? C’est la seule inquiétude. Tout le monde aussi se sent humilié que nous soyons purement passifs dans ce drame.*¹²¹

There was a general lack of fraternity amongst the French but direct experience could also alter one’s overall perception. This could be true not only on a regional level but also on an individual level. In *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*, a man’s wife was brutally assaulted and tortured by the Germans, whereas another man had no direct problems with the Germans at all. Evidently, the former perception of the Germans would be infinitely more negative than the latter perception, shaped as it was by his negative experience. Werth noticed the difference between children from Alsace and Besançon, and those of the town: *“Les élèves réfugiés de Besançon ou les Alsaciens résistent durement à toute idée de collaboration. Parmi les élèves dont les familles habitent Bourg, la plupart sont inertes. Pour eux, l’Allemand est loin et il y a encore*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.54-55. (4.10.40)

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.107. (23.11.40)

du beurre dans les fermes.”¹²² The refugee children had seen their homeland repatriated to Germany whereas the children of the *bourg* had yet to be directly affected by the Germans. Werth was well aware that the personal experiences of the refugee children had affected the way that they perceived the Germans and Vichy’s desire for collaboration.

Examining the mindset of the diarists in the summer of 1940 throws up many differences in opinion, revealing the confusion and uncertainty of the period. It also reflects the fact that the Occupation initially impacted on the French to differing degrees, caused by regional variations or different personal experiences. Yet leading up to this period, one can also detect shared beliefs that would have shaped their overall view of the Occupation. Firstly, there was an aversion to war, which would remain constant up to, and indeed beyond, the defeat. The humiliating defeat would only reinforce the idea that to carry on the fight was pointless. The Gaullist notion of continued resistance was soundly rejected by a civilian population haunted by the effects of battle. The civilian *débâcle* would endure well beyond the military *débâcle* in the minds of the diarists, and would serve to encourage the idea that war was to be avoided at all costs. The widely-held conviction that France would ultimately prevail in the war with Germany was revealed to be illusory, which would raise further questions about France in general. This would leave them vulnerable to the manipulation of both Vichy and the German military authorities. The First World War had seen France pull together as a nation in a *union sacrée* but while the mobilisation for the Second World War went relatively smoothly, there had certainly been no national enthusiasm for the war. The *débâcle* and the eventual defeat certainly put an end to any possibility of a *union sacrée* and exposed the divisions that had been lying just below the surface. The process of national disintegration, which had been well under way during the 1930s, accelerated with the events of the Exodus and the physical divisions imposed by the armistice. The shame of defeat had been, to a certain extent, alleviated by the armistice but the consequences of that armistice were not fully appreciated at the time by a French population in utter chaos and turmoil.

¹²² Werth, *Déposition*, p.212. (30.5.41)

CHAPTER TWO

Remembrance of a past France

L'Histoire avec un grand H a pris au piège les histoires individuelles.¹

Introduction: the historical evolution of the Occupation.

The historical representation of the 'dark years' has undergone several transformations. New interpretations have superseded pre-existing ones or, at least, have led to new paths of enquiry. The history of the Occupation, in that sense, is a living, breathing entity.² Far from being a past that has truly passed, the Occupation is a period whose historiography continues to be rewritten. The events and experiences of that period remain unchanged but our interpretation of those events and experiences is constantly evolving with the passage of time. The private diaries symbolise the immortality of history as well as its pliancy. What the diarists chose to record for posterity is the living of history but their individual perspectives offer up different interpretations to that history. Moreover, it is not just the historiography of the Occupation period that has evolved with the passage of time. The private diaries reveal that opinion was constantly changing and evolving over the entire duration of the Occupation period. Opinion was never stagnant or lifeless. When reading history, it is easy to be mistaken in thinking that the past has relinquished all its mysteries to time. Just as historians have reacted to the opening of archives or the publication of influential works, so too did the diarists react to new developments or influential experiences. Contemporary historians generally agree upon some aspects of the Occupation but any

¹ Veillon, Dominique, *Vivre et survivre en France 1939-1947*, (Paris: Editions Payot & Rivages, 1995), p.8.

² Golsan, Richard, *History and counterhistory in postwar France. Vichy's afterlife*, (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), pp.1-2. Henry Rousso argued that a post-mortem examination of Vichy France is still impossible today, as the Vichy years maintain a presence in modern French society. The trials of René Bousquet, Paul Touvier and Maurice Papon are examples of Vichy's ever-present legacy. In that sense, the cadaver is still too warm for the historical pathologist to perform a complete autopsy.

overall interpretation is still very much open-ended. Similarly, one can detect global trends amongst the diarists as the Occupation progressed but the complexity of their individual experiences prohibits any definitive evaluation of their overall collective experience.

This chapter is concerned with examining the notion of change over time and exploring concepts, which have rarely been the primary focus of the historiography of the Occupation period. The French may have overwhelmingly remained outside the poles of collaboration and resistance throughout the Occupation but this does not mean that their behaviour and attitudes remained static for the entire duration. Yet what forces were acting to prevent any dramatic shifts in attitude or behaviour? Part One is concerned with the crucial formative years of the Occupation. The opinions formed during the years 1940-1941 go a long way to explaining the behaviour of the French for the entire Occupation period. Historians have talked about the notion of a France fully behind Pétain in the initial period of the Occupation³, but the diarists reveal that support for Pétain was far from unanimous. Similarly, the absence of vocal disapproval of Vichy should not necessarily be interpreted as support for the new regime. Indifference better represents the diarists' attitude towards Vichy than acquiescence. The correct behaviour of the Germans following the defeat should not undermine the fact that their military presence in France was overwhelmingly rejected. Yet the relatively benign first year of the Occupation and the absence of overt hostility towards the Germans should be seen as having a major influence on the indifferent attitude of the diarists towards Vichy. Vichy would always be judged by its ability to protect the French against the Germans and alleviate their suffering. The Germans, therefore, effectively governed public opinion in both the Unoccupied and Occupied Zones.

Part Two is concerned with examining the development of French attitudes and behaviour after the first year of the Occupation. One issue that still provokes controversy today is the persecution of the Jews in France. The historiography has focused on Vichy's role in the 'Final Solution' without an appreciation of how the average French citizen viewed the persecution of the Jews in France. In the index of Paxton and Marrus'

³ Amouroux, Henri, *Quarante millions de Pétainistes juin 1940 – juin 1941*, (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1977).

collaborative work⁴, for example, there is a noticeable absence of personal testimonies. The diarists who did comment on the persecution of the Jews observed that public opinion towards the Jews did change from indifference to sympathy but there was never any significant vocal support for their plight. What were the reasons behind this silence? Secondly, did Germany's increased repression after 1941 affect the French more than Vichy's growing complicity? The shooting of French hostages did nothing to generate support for the Germans but there was little patience for Vichy's constant attempts to curry favour with the Germans. Lastly, the final outcome of the war remained uncertain for the first half of the Occupation but after the Allied landing in North Africa, at the end of 1942, the balance seemed to shift irrevocably in favour of the Allies. Did the expectation of an Allied victory make the Occupation more difficult for the diarists to endure? These questions all require a more personal evaluation of the period.

It is worth tracing, therefore, a broad outline of the historiography since the Liberation in order to see where new directions might be taken from the perspective of history from below. The Occupation period is the most intensively researched period in French history. This is all the more remarkable given that the French were initially more intent about forgetting the 'dark years' after the Liberation than examining them in great detail. De Gaulle would be the foremost instigator of this attempt to restrict the Occupation years to a temporary breach in French history. His provisional government issued an ordinance immediately after the Liberation, which maintained that all Vichy's legislation would be declared null and void. Furthermore, de Gaulle would refuse to announce the restoration of the French Republic, claiming that it had never ceased to exist.⁵ He refused to acknowledge the truth that *L'Etat français* had been legitimate, which had the effect of marginalising the role of Vichy in occupied France. The diarists reveal that no one doubted the legality of Vichy but their views certainly differed on its utility. De Gaulle preferred to propagate the myth that the horrors inflicted on France during the Occupation had been the work of the Germans and that only a handful of traitors had betrayed France. Such a theory enabled de Gaulle to silence the widespread call for vengeance that prevented the French from moving on from the shameful and

⁴ Robert Paxton & Michael Marrus, *Vichy France and the Jews*, (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

⁵ Jackson, *The dark years*, p.1.

divisive events of the Occupation. The notion of forty million resisters who had awaited the reconciliation of state and nation satisfied people right across the political spectrum.

The bubble, however, would eventually burst. The heroic myth could only conceal the sinister underbelly of the Occupation for so long. The 1970s saw a new interpretation of the Occupation years, which challenged de Gaulle's version of a Resistant France.⁶ Marcel Ophüls' documentary film, *Le chagrin et la pitié*, which was released in 1971, portrayed the French population in an unprecedentedly unfavourable light. Far from being unified in obdurate resistance to the Germans, the French were depicted as selfish and passively *attentistes*.⁷ Werth would often adopt a scathing attitude towards the selfish, apathetic peasants of Saint-Amour but he would equally often admire them for their refusal to succumb to Vichy propaganda. In order to disprove a theory, there is the tendency to go to the other extreme. Ophüls created the impression that the French had been a nation of collaborators. The diarists reveal that opinion was very rarely so clear-cut. Robert Paxton's *La France de Vichy*, which appeared in 1972, took a more scholarly approach. It was more concerned with exposing the true nature of Vichy than providing an insight into the behaviour and attitudes of the French population at large. His work was instrumental in revealing that collaboration was a French design ultimately rejected by Hitler.⁸ Vichy consistently offered more than what it was asked to do, particularly in its anti-Semitic and labour policies. The Pétainist myth of a *double jeu* and the Gaullist myth of a Resistant France were totally undermined by this notion of an independent entity acting of its own volition. The private diaries reveal very little on the everyday workings of the Vichy regime but they provide a very useful insight into how the French reacted to the Vichy regime and its policies. Moreover, they reveal that Pétain often

⁶ See Jackson, *The dark years*, p.9. It also challenged the first history of Vichy, (*Histoire de Vichy 1940-1944*, published in 1954) which had come not from an academic historian but from the writer Robert Aron. He argued that Vichy had been used as a shield to protect France from the German demands for collaboration. He also distinguished between Pétain and Laval, blaming the latter for Vichy's failings. Aron's interpretation was certainly not Gaullist but at the same time it did not necessarily subvert the Gaullist myth of a Resistant France nor increase the number of traitors. It simply tried to incorporate Vichy into this Resistant France.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.2.

⁸ Paxton, Robert, *Vichy France. Old Guard and New Order 1940-1944*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p.51. Paxton expanded on Hoffmann's notion that there was not just one Vichy but several Vichys and several kinds of collaboration, as opposed to Aron's notion of a good and bad Vichy. He did acknowledge that there was a degree of coercion from Germany but ultimately Vichy's policy of collaboration was of its own volition.

assumed a distinct role from that of Vichy but opinion would constantly oscillate with regard to these two separate entities. By the end of the Occupation, Pétain and Vichy could no longer be separated but this process should not be seen as strictly linear.

It must be remembered that Paxton was concentrating on Franco-German relations with respect to the Vichy regime. He was limited in his scope by the fact that the French archives had not yet been opened for public investigation, which would have prevented him from widening his approach to an evaluation of how the French viewed the Vichy regime. The opening up of the French archives at the end of the 1970s caused a change in the focus of the historiography, which made a step in this direction. The studies of Pierre Laborie, John Sweets and Phillipe Burrin are examples of the shift in emphasis away from the Vichy regime to the French people and their social and political attitudes. They broke down 'French opinion' into smaller subsets: regions of France or various social and political groups. Such studies challenged the traditional notions of collaboration and resistance.⁹ These studies, written from the perspective of history from below, sparked off other studies, which were concerned with individual reactions to the Occupation on an everyday level.¹⁰ They all took account of the fact that opinion was multifarious and ever changing. It is impossible to talk of French opinion or behaviour according to black and white notions of collaboration and resistance, since only a tiny minority comprised either group. Instead, it is necessary to accommodate the overwhelmingly different shades of grey of French opinion and behaviour. Burrin's term of *accommodation* is now recognised as the most appropriate term to represent this attitude of moral ambiguity.¹¹ Certain sacrifices or compromises had to be made. Yet at the same time such a term tends to take away the individual experience from the Occupation years. The private diaries reveal that within this broad framework of *accommodation* there was a great variation in behaviour throughout the period. What continues to remain most lacking is an investigation into why the French overwhelmingly chose to adopt this strategy of

⁹ Jackson, *The dark years*, pp.12-14.

¹⁰ Dominique Veillon, *Vivre et survivre en France* (1995); J.-P. Rioux, (ed.) *La vie culturelle sous Vichy* (1990); Henri Amouroux, *La vie des Français sous l'Occupation*, (Paris, 1990). Such studies, however, still treat individuals on a collective basis, albeit on a significantly narrower level than historical works undertaken from the perspective of History from above.

¹¹ Burrin, Phillipe, *La France à l'heure allemande 1940-1944*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1995).

accommodation. These histories from below are more concerned with illustrating the complexity of opinion rather than exploring the reasons behind this complexity.

What this suggests is that opinion is still very much divided on an overall interpretation of the Occupation years.¹² The historiography may well be clear on the role of the Vichy regime but there are still prevailing doubts over the behaviour and attitudes of the French population at large. Henry Rousso discovered that Vichy continues to exert an influence on opinion in contemporary French society and still excites controversy.¹³ One area in particular the historiography has tended to focus on since the 1970s is Vichy and the Jews. Where historians once distinguished between the formative years of Vichy and the totalitarianism of its final stages, historians such as Paxton and Marrus began to stress the continuity of Vichy repression.¹⁴ What these studies fail to consider, however, is the relation of French opinion to the persecution of the Jews. Moreover, there appears to be an imbalance over how much the historiography devotes to this issue and the impact this issue had on the French population who endured the Occupation. The private diaries reveal very little on the subject, which raises the question whether there is an historical Judaeo-centric view of the Occupation period. That is in no way to downplay the role of Vichy in the persecution of the Jews but, rather, to suggest that the Jewish issue has assumed a more prominent position in contemporary French society than it did during the Occupation period.

¹² Some recent studies attempt to offer a definitive study of the Occupation, encapsulating both French opinion and an examination of the Vichy regime: Julian Jackson, *The Dark Years 1940-1944*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Robert Gildea, *Marianne in chains. In search of the German occupation 1940-1945*, (London: Macmillan, 2002).

¹³ Rousso, Henry, *Le syndrome de Vichy*, (Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1990). There is also his collaborative work with Eric Conan, *Vichy: un passé qui ne passe pas*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1996) which appeared at the time when controversy surrounded President Mitterrand's own Vichy past. In 1997, the trial of Maurice Papon for crimes against humanity became the longest trial in French history. The verdict, however, satisfied very few, as the trial raised more questions than it answered.

¹⁴ Peschanski, Denis, *Vichy 1940-1944: Contrôle et exclusion*, (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 1997).

Part One

The formative years 1940 - 1941

*La débâcle totale n'était pas prévue; les plus pessimistes ne prévoyaient que la défaite. Au début de 1940, qui eût prédit une dictature à la solde de l'étranger et une terreur blanche en miniature qui ne demande à grandir?*¹⁵

Quarante millions de Pétainistes and Vichy.

Pétain announced on June 17, 1940 that he would offer France *le don de sa personne pour atténuer son malheur*.¹⁶ The spontaneous movement of confidence towards Pétain can be seen as a result of the uncertainties thrown up by the Exodus. Gide reveals in June 1940 how the defeat had come too quickly to enable one to take one's bearings properly:

*Quant à la situation présente..., le temps n'est pas encore venu où il faudra «se prononcer». Les vraies questions ne sont pas encore posées. Pour l'instant je ne sens en moi que de l'attente; et de l'espoir... mais je ne sais encore de quoi.*¹⁷

With a population riddled with divisions and experiencing a sense of betrayal, it is easy to understand why Pétain's offer to be the protector of the French people should have been so readily accepted. It is crucial to consider that his offer was to protect France from Germany rather than collaborate with Germany. The policy of collaboration would, therefore, come to be embodied by Vichy. As the epigraph suggests, Vichy would only be seen, in the summer of 1940, as a provisional episode; a regime of circumstance. As the Occupation progressed, the realisation that the Vichy regime was not going to be as provisional as first thought corresponded, more or less, with growing opposition to its policies.¹⁸ Yet Pétain would always keep that father-figure role.

¹⁵ Werth, *Déposition*, p.87. (11.11.40)

¹⁶ Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*, p.15.

¹⁷ Gide, *Journal*, pp.31-32. (26.6.40)

¹⁸ Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy*, pp.234-236.

Pétain would be seen as the saviour and protector of France not from the Occupation but, rather, from the *débâcle*. It was he who had put an end to the fighting with the call for an armistice. From the very outset of the Occupation, he established a separate identity to that of Vichy. Vichy was a provisional regime to keep France running and to help maintain independence but Pétain was the father-figure of France trying to restore order and stability. His relationship with the rest of France was much more intimate. For a long time, and certainly beyond the first year, Werth would observe that people would distinguish between Pétain and his regime:

*N. espère et souhaite la victoire de l'Angleterre et, en même temps, il croit en Pétain. J'ai déjà constaté que quelques paysans séparaient Pétain d'avec les hommes de Vichy. Mais pour eux Pétain est une manière de bon vieux. Au lieu que N... lui prête de fermes desseins. Il a sauvé, de la France, ce qui, après la débâcle, en pouvait être sauvé. En attendant que l'Angleterre ait gagné, Pétain fait l'intérim de de Gaulle.*¹⁹

In the countryside, it was commonly said 'Ah if only the Marshal knew'. Even when his actions were met with disapproval, such as his meeting with Hitler in October 1940, he was able to recover support, such as when he sacked Laval in December 1940. Pétain would become an incarnation of France. The song *Maréchal, nous voilà* became a semi-official anthem with its closing line of 'For Pétain is France, France is Pétain'.²⁰ There was at times certainly beyond the summer of 1940 a blurring of lines between Pétain and Vichy but their respective roles were quite distinct initially.

Pétainism, as opposed to support for the regime, was a genuinely popular political culture born out of the Exodus, where many individuals had experienced the disintegration of the French state first-hand. In many cases, the authorities were the first to flee and this sense of betrayal by the politicians encouraged the French to withdraw into themselves and retreat into self-reliance. Pétain's apolitical talk of *les mensonges qui nous ont fait tant de mal* and his compassion for the suffering of the refugees struck a chord with a population, who felt abandoned and directionless. For the first time since the declaration of the war, where the gap between official propaganda and reality had increasingly widened, here was someone who was genuinely addressing the French

¹⁹ Werth, *Déposition*, p.140. (22.12.40) See also p.153, (14.1.41) and p.188, (20.3.41) and Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.146. (24.9.40)

²⁰ Jackson, *The dark years*, p.278.

people in words that actually reflected their own experiences.²¹ Bobkowski would emphatically reject Pétain's claim: "*«Trop peu d'enfants, trop peu d'armes, trop peu d'alliés, voilà la cause de notre défaite.»*" Yet he would be far more receptive to his claim that the defeat had exposed France's rotten core: "*«Depuis la victoire, l'esprit de jouissance l'a emporté sur l'esprit de sacrifice. On a revendiqué plus qu'on n'a servi. On a voulu l'épargner l'effort; on rencontre aujourd'hui le malheur.»* Enfin quelques mots de vérité."²² Pétain was a means of alleviating the turmoil that had arisen during the Exodus but the people were far more sceptical of Vichy's programme to mend France's divisions:

*Les gens de Vichy veulent régénérer la France. Retour à la terre, famille, morale. Régénérer la France avec des poncifs de bachot. Car ils ne connaissent même plus le beau langage, les belles périodes, le style en toge de la bourgeoisie de 1840.*²³

Pétain was the object of an extraordinary personality cult with images produced of him on an industrial scale. It was sustained by his provincial tours of the Unoccupied Zone, which started at Toulouse on 5 November, 1940. Although the cult was at times excessive in its praise of Pétain, it would be wrong to think that it was an entirely artificial construction orchestrated by Vichy. Yet as Werth remarked on a trip to Lyons, the popularity of Pétain may well have been genuine, but there was pressure from above to exploit it:

*A la campagne, le maréchal n'était pas obsédant. Nous n'avions vu son image que sur le journal. Les vendeurs de cartes postales ne sont pas venus jusque dans les fermes isolées. A Lyon, le maréchal est partout. Ses portraits, ses messages, ses allocutions radio-diffusées sont collées aux glaces des magasins. Signe d'un incontestable enthousiasme? J'apprends qu'avant son passage à Lyon la préfecture avait distribué ces placards et que nul commerçant ne se fût risqué à ne les point apposer. La publicité du maréchal fut organisée comme celle d'un grand cirque. Sur les arbres des quais, la préfecture a fait coller des bandes imprimées, qui portent l'inscription: «Vive Pétain!»*²⁴

The people may well have bought portraits or postcards of Pétain but the fact that they did so mainly in concentrated urban areas rather than isolated rural areas is an indication

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.279-281.

²² Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.34. (25.6.40) See also Gide, *Journal*, p.29: (14.6.40 – 24.6.40) He also agrees with Pétain's words but one day after the armistice cannot comprehend how France has agreed to offer up itself to the Germans.

²³ Werth, *Déposition*, p.47. (26.9.40)

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.139. (22.12.40)

that his appeal was nevertheless reliant on visible promotion. In other words, the genuine goodwill of the French people towards Pétain was ruthlessly exploited and this exploitation was best exercised in populated areas. The implication is that there was ostensibly great support for Pétain but if one looks beyond the portraits and provincial tours, the substance of this popularity is less clearly defined. From his observations in Saint-Amour, Werth saw that the peasants were angry over the policies of Vichy²⁵ yet they chose to ignore the negative aspects of Vichy to shelter under Pétain in a safe, peaceful, rural France: “*Le maréchal est par-dessus Vichy une carte postale en couleurs, une image de piété, une icône dans sa niche.*”²⁶ Moreover, it is important to remember that this promotion of Pétain only occurred in the Unoccupied Zone. Vichy may well have officially spoken for all of France but German military rule in the Occupied Zone effectively silenced Pétain’s voice. Rist, for example, looked upon Pétain’s words with distant disdain:

*Pétain a donné une interview à des journalistes américains, où il déclare que la France doit redevenir «agricole et chrétienne». La stupidité de ces propos est vraiment désarmante. En France christianisme = catholicisme. Croit-il faire plaisir aux Allemands? Et croit-il faire plaisir au clergé français qui déteste le national-socialisme?*²⁷

The diarists reveal that support for Pétain was far from universal but at times criticism of him was not always readily apparent. François Mauriac, for example, would clearly disapprove of Pétain’s refusal to face up to the humiliating defeat:

*Le 17 juin, après que le maréchal Pétain eut donné à son pays cette suprême preuve d’amour, les Français entendirent à la radio une voix qui leur assurait que jamais la France n’avait été aussi glorieuse. Hé bien, non! Il ne nous reste d’autre chance de salut que de ne plus jamais nous mentir à nous-mêmes. Reconnaissons que nous sommes au fond d’un abîme d’humiliation.*²⁸

Mauriac, a devout Catholic, was much more receptive to Pétain’s notion that life would be hard under the Occupation, and that the French would have to atone for their sins. Indeed, at times his words bear a remarkable resemblance to those of Pétain:

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.158 *Ceux du bourg s’en fichent. Ils ne lisent plus les mandements et messages. Mais ils sont de mauvaise humeur et très près de la colère à cause des dernières taxations.* (8.11.40)

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.140. (22.12.40) See also p.153. (14.1.41) and p.191. (26.3.41)

²⁷ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.90. (26.8.40) This uncertainty over the direction Vichy was taking can be explained by the lack of information flowing beyond the demarcation zone.

²⁸ Mauriac, *Figaro*, (19.6.40) See also Duméril, *Journal d’un honnête homme pendant l’occupation*, p.95. (21.12.40)

*Nous possédons dans le monde bouleversé d'aujourd'hui la seule richesse qui compte, et qui est de pouvoir tirer de notre sol notre subsistance. [...] Cette terre foulée aux pieds par les vainqueurs reste une terre bénie et d'autant plus bénie que de notre malheur un bonheur du moins va sortir: la paysannerie française à demi détruite se reconstituera, et nos enfants affamés retrouveront leur vieille nourrice et se disputeront ses mamelles, dont parlait Sully: labourage et pâturage...*²⁹

This view bears a striking resemblance to Vichy's policy of *retour à la terre*, which praised the simple, rural virtues of the peasants. Stanley Hoffmann's description of Vichy as a 'pluralist dictatorship' is apposite.³⁰ Vichy did not merely represent one set of values but a whole range of values, which, in turn, could appeal to a whole range of people. This does not mean, however, that because certain Vichy policies coincided with the views of Mauriac that he supported Pétain or Vichy. It is significant to note that Mauriac even initially advocated collaboration with Germany:

*Et pourtant, nous ne pouvons rien faire aujourd'hui qu'une politique de collaboration, dans la mesure du possible. Mais je doute que la condition essentielle qui serait d'avoir un gouvernement respecté par les Allemands, soit remplie par nos chefs actuels... Hélas!*³¹

Vichy's ineffectual leadership may have convinced Mauriac to join the literary resistance.

There were others who arrived unequivocally at their certainties about Pétain very early on. Rist, living in Paris in the Occupied Zone was initially hesitant as to the intentions of Vichy but he would be very critical of Pétain: "*Discours pitoyable de Pétain dans lequel il incrimine la faible natalité et le désir de loisir.*"³² Rist became a lot clearer in his idea of Vichy towards the end of 1940 but was still doubtful as to its exact function:

*Il se passe quelque chose à Vichy. Mais quoi? Quelles demandes allemandes? Quelles dispositions chez ces ministres divisés entre eux, préoccupés de politique intérieure, de préparer l'avènement chacun de son prétendant, - et qui ont déjà tant cédé à l'ennemi, qu'il n'y a pas de raison de ne pas continuer.*³³

²⁹ *Ibid.*, *Figaro*, (15.7.40) See Bloch, *L'étrange défaite*, pp.180-182. Similarly, Bloch believed that there were advantages in the people identifying with the land, but on the other hand, he recognised Germany's desire to have vassal states produce agricultural foodstuffs, which would turn France into a *musée d'antiquailles*.

³⁰ Hoffmann, *Essais sur la France*, p.18.

³¹ Burren, *La France à l'heure allemande*, pp.31-32.

³² Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, pp.73-74. (19-22.6.40) See also pp.78-79. (2.7.40)

³³ *Ibid.*, p.120. (21.12.40)

Rist was clearly not fooled that Vichy, despite its preoccupation with internal reform, could act independently of Germany. It is interesting to note that Rist should feel that the Vichy government, working from the so-called *zone libre*, was different from the German administration of the Occupied Zone only by degree. Werth was far better placed in Saint-Amour to monitor Pétain and his Vichy regime. From the outset, he was opposed to Vichy and Pétain:

*On attendait de n'importe quel gouvernement qu'il se déclarât avant tout provisoire, qu'il subsistât jusqu'à la paix dans la réserve et la pudeur. Mais celui-ci impose ses passions partisans et les habille des laissés-pour-compte du fascisme. La France est comparable à une usine incendiée. Tout a croulé. Seule, la loge du concierge est intacte. Le concierge l'habite et garde les décombres. Mais il devient fou, ne se contente pas de chasser les pillards, les ramasseurs de métal. Il s' imagine qu'il est le maître de l'usine. Et il plaque à sa vitre des mandements aux ouvriers, des notes de service et surveille attentivement un appareil de pointage, qui n'enregistre plus ni entrées ni sorties. Tel est le maréchal.*³⁴

Werth was by no means the only one who believed that there was no hope of rebuilding France with this *concierge fou* presiding over the ruins of France. Bloch was equally convinced that France could rebuild itself but believed that Vichy was merely a caretaker government until that day arrived:

*Notre redressement national en sera, à coup sûr, longuement retardé. Retardé seulement, j'en ai la conviction. Les ressorts profonds de notre peuple sont intacts et prêts à rebondir. [...] La France de la défaite aura eu un gouvernement de vieillards. Cela est tout naturel. La France d'un nouveau printemps devra être la chose des jeunes.*³⁵

The government of *vieillards* is a clear reference to Pétain but it is also referring to the values of the past to which Vichy wanted to return. In this respect, Bloch's vision of Pétain and Vichy resembles very much that of Bernanos:

la France s'est donnée publiquement au vieillard, à la vieillesse, à l'esprit de vieillesse, la plus jeune, la plus rieuse nation du monde s'est jetée dans la vieillesse par désespoir, comme si elle ne se jugeait plus digne d'un autre genre de mort. Le Vieillard se croit son maître, et l'histoire dira qu'il en a été dupe, qu'il est prisonnier de sa jeune proie. Elle lui a fait incarner la honte qu'à l'heure de la plus grande détresse elle n'a pas osé assumer. Elle a mis dans ce vieillard toute sa honte, comme on verse de l'huile dans une outre de cuir, et le

³⁴ Werth, *Déposition*, pp.42-43. (6.9.40) He saw Vichy as a *mélange de nazisme et d'idyllisme champêtre*.

³⁵ Bloch, *L'étrange défaite*, pp.206-207. Although Bloch did not write a diary, his testimony was written immediately after the defeat, which situates him in that period.

*jour venu, au premier tournant favorable de sa destinée, elle jettera dans l'oubli, à la fois, le Vieillard et la Honte.*³⁶

It is surprising how prophetic the words of these individuals are, given that they arrived at them so quickly and with such certainty. It illustrates that the notion of *quarante millions de Pétainistes* is a false one. These individuals were by no means a majority but the fact that they were so clearly against Pétain would suggest that the support for Pétain was not as unanimous as has been thought. To these individuals must be added the fascist supporters, such as Drieu, who were far from supportive of Pétain and his reactionary government: "*Ce vieux con de maréchal, ce salaud de Laval réagissent comme ils sont aux événements. J'ai toujours méprisé ce général passif, ce défenseur de Verdun purement négatif.*"³⁷ Then there were those like Roussin in Marseilles who were completely indifferent to Pétain and Vichy:

*Je négligeai donc le général de Londres et ne me souciai guère du maréchal de Vichy. Je retrouvais la vie, c'était pour y faire du théâtre. Je l'écris loyalement: je ne voyais pas en quoi la guerre me concernait encore. L'euphorie de Marseille à cette époque dût fortement peser sur mon état d'esprit. Je laissais d'autres en toute bonne foi jouer les David face au Goliath hitlérien, s'ils étaient assez utopiques pour croire à leurs chances.*³⁸

When one considers those individuals who espoused similar ideas to Pétain but who did not openly support him, such as Mauriac, the anti-Pétain sentiment becomes even more significant. Indeed, De Beauvoir would go so far as to ask the question whether the French had more difficulty in accepting Pétain's stance than they did accepting the German military presence:

*La haine, je m'aperçus que je ne l'avais pas encore connue, mais seulement des rages assez abstraites; maintenant, j'en savais le goût; elle visait avec une particulière violence ceux de nos ennemis qui m'étaient le plus familiers. Les discours de Pétain m'atteignaient plus vivement que ceux d'Hitler [...]*³⁹

If support for Pétain was far from unanimous, why did this not translate into more conspicuous opposition to Pétain and the Vichy regime? It is important to remember that the defeat required someone or something to blame, which inevitably entrenched existing

³⁶ Bernanos, *Lettre aux Anglais*, p.39. Similarly Bernanos was writing his open letters in that period immediately following the defeat.

³⁷ Drieu, *Journal*, p.303. (8.11.42) See also p.275. (1.10.41)

³⁸ Roussin, *Rideau gris et habit vert*, pp.101-102.

³⁹ De Beauvoir, *La force de l'âge*, pp.515-516. See also p.479: *Hitler, le nazisme, c'était un univers étranger que je haïssais à distance, avec une espèce de tranquillité. Pétain, la Révolution nationale, je les détestais d'une manière intime et dans une colère qui flambait à neuf chaque jour.*

divisions and, moreover, forced them out into the open. The expectation of victory would have delayed the consideration of these divisions until after the defeat. There were diarists such as Drieu, however, who had noted before the German invasion the climate into which Vichy would enter: “Après les votes sur Daladier et Reynaud on sent la France aussi divisée qu’au temps de Munich. Il y a plusieurs factions et personne ne sait comment défendre la cause qu’il défend.”⁴⁰ There was no one voice calling for change but, rather, several voices all calling for change. The defeat presented the French with the perfect opportunity for change but their lack of consensus over what direction to take would remain constant. Vichy entered this climate of open divisions with the impossible task of bringing these different factions together. The irony was, however, that the divided nature of France suited admirably Vichy’s pluralist approach, as it gave the illusion that France’s diverse interests were all being catered to:

*Le pire est que les vieilles dissensions se prolongent. Tout le monde se croit trahi, les uns par les communistes, les autres par les gens de droite. Il est certain que bien des gens se consolent aujourd’hui en pensant que leurs idées sont au pouvoir! Mais quelles idées avait le parti au pouvoir? Et comment les défendait-il?*⁴¹

This uncertainty over what specific direction Vichy was taking would not last for long but it would last long enough to create the impression that there was an initial broad acceptance of Vichy. The defeat would naturally encourage a unanimous call for change, as the old system had been brutally exposed in its failings. Yet this universal desire for change should not be confused with universal support for Vichy’s proposed solutions. How could a nation so divided and so broken accept a new regime with open arms? It is over-simplistic to think of France in terms of polar divisions of Left and Right or Catholic and Protestant. France was not simply split down the middle but, rather, as Werth described, cut *en tronçons*:

La France est en tronçons: France occupée, France du maréchal, France des paysans, France des ouvriers, France des bourgeois, France de droite et France de gauche, l’une prétendant étouffer l’autre et tout résoudre par le fascisme, qui demain peut-être se décomposera en Italie même. France travailleuse, savante et pensante, France des cartes postales du maréchal, tous ces tronçons de France se rassembleront-ils? Sous la botte allemande, par la brutalité du fascisme, d’un parti de l’ordre à tout prix? Ou bien la France se réinventera-t-

⁴⁰ Drieu, *Journal*, p.165. (24.3.40)

⁴¹ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, 84. (21.7.40)

*elle? Le peuple la réinventera-t-il? La bourgeoisie n'est plus capable de penser la France. L'idée de France est devenue une idée difficile. Le peuple l'éclaircira-t-elle? Mais le peuple existe-t-il encore?*⁴²

These different sections of France were looking for different solutions. It was what they perceived Vichy could offer rather than what Vichy actually delivered that accounts for this ostensible initial support for Vichy. This support, enthusiastic or resigned, came from the disintegration of the French nation. Vichy was an attempt to rebuild the national framework and, to use the expression of François Bédarida, created the false hope of *"l'impossible symbiose du national et du social."*⁴³ The Vichy regime was fortunate in that it gave the French people what they wanted. The fighting was put to an end and the Republican regime faded away with massive approval because it was confused with a past that had seen great political and social divisions, which appeared to have paved the way for national disaster.⁴⁴

This did not stop the overwhelming majority of the French population from consciously electing to remain on the sidelines rather than actively participate in Vichy's programmes. Such a widespread absence of active participation would only encourage further doubts over Vichy's value. Thérive, writing from occupied Paris, concluded from a conversation with someone who advocated the *comte de Paris* acting as king: *"En revanche, personne ne croit aux institutions de Vichy."*⁴⁵ Werth believed that greed was the only explanation for the actions of those honourable citizens who had taken up roles in Vichy: *"je commence à croire qu'il y a une passion de la haute politique, indépendante de son contenu, comme il y a un goût de l'amour qui se satisfait de n'importe quelle femme."*⁴⁶ Rist was more inclined to think that the bourgeois fear of communism, rather than the lust for power, was the motivating factor:

Dans la catastrophe actuelle, le pire est que les bénéficiaires politiques du désastre ont intérêt à ce qu'il continue. Par la force des choses, les gens au pouvoir (et ceux qui se réjouissent de les y voir) doivent souhaiter la défaite de l'Angleterre et bientôt celle des Etats-Unis! Car la victoire anglaise sera leur chute. Par une conséquence qu'ils ne veulent pas avouer mais qui se produit en dépit d'eux-mêmes, ils souhaitent la continuation du triomphe allemand et la

⁴² Werth, *Déposition*, p.150. (3.1.41)

⁴³ Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy*, pp.200-201.

⁴⁴ Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*, pp.24-26.

⁴⁵ Thérive, *L'envers du décor*, p.26. (October 1940) Roussin (*Rideau gris et habit vert*, pp.101-102) freely admitted that he paid little attention to Pétain.

⁴⁶ Werth, *Déposition*, p.142. (22.12.40)

*France subjuguée. Ainsi il y en France un parti de l'humiliation et de la défaite, préférant cette honte à une France libre mais où ils ont peur d'une partie de leurs concitoyens - ceux qu'ils nomment les communistes. C'est cette peur qui est à la base de toute la perversion de ces dernières années.*⁴⁷

What is significant is that all these views shared a very negative opinion of Vichy at a relatively early stage. The influence of Pétain had very little effect on shaping their opinion of Vichy in general, which suggests that Pétain had forged an identity separate from Vichy in June 1940, and that would have lasting effects. Werth, for example, probed a railway worker for his view on how his peers perceived Vichy:

*«On ne s'occupe, me dit-il, que des restrictions et, pour le reste, on attend. On espère que l'Angleterre gagnera. C'est tout. On ne parle pas de politique...»
«Et Laval...» «Très impopulaire...» – «Et Pétain? ...» – «Beaucoup pensent que, sans lui, les Allemands feraient pire...»*⁴⁸

When talking of Vichy during the first year of the Occupation, it is important to distinguish between the National Revolution and the policy of Collaboration. The former was seen to be carried out almost immediately but the latter would take longer to take shape in the French psyche. Pétain's full powers were the platform for a fundamental transformation of politics and society, which would come to be called the National Revolution. The Armistice would provide a durable platform for the redefining of Franco-German relations, which would come to be called Collaboration. The vote of full powers and the Armistice were the necessary prelude to these policies but it must be stressed that they were not a logical outcome of these events. They were a deliberate choice. Moreover, they were two distinct policies.⁴⁹ The important thing to remember is that the National Revolution, although largely ignored, was perceived as Pétain's idea, whereas Collaboration was perceived as Laval's brainchild. What was equally significant was that the latter would come to be perceived as far more sinister than the former.

The National Revolution was not a revolution from below but, rather, a revolution from above. It was an attempt to redress the imbalance created by the concessions

⁴⁷ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, pp.90-91. (31.8.40) See also p.82. (12.7.40) and pp.121-122. (28.12.40)

⁴⁸ Werth, *Déposition*, p.113. (29.11.40)

⁴⁹ Jackson, *The dark years*, pp.139-140. Weygand, for example, was opposed to collaboration but supported the National Revolution as a means of allowing France one day to avenge its defeat, as Prussia had done after Jena. Laval, on the other hand, was cynical about the National Revolution but committed to collaboration. He felt that the National Revolution was the instrument of collaboration, whereas Pétain felt that collaboration was the instrument of the National Revolution. Laval believed the National Revolution was only useful for maintaining order to ensure German conciliation, whereas Pétain believed collaboration could alleviate conditions in France to facilitate his reforms.

granted to the workers and the loss of bourgeois privileges during the 1930s. Rist believed that the National Revolution was an attempt to deceive the French that France's sovereignty remained intact. Moreover, the elite were exploiting the uncertainty of the future to carry out reforms, which were designed to halt the erosion of their interests:

Ainsi nous sommes conduits dans la nuit, pendant que les imbéciles continuent à parler de «rénovation nationale». Sans doute par le mensonge, la stupidité et l'impuissance. Beaux atouts pour «refaire l'âme d'un peuple» comme disent les journalistes payés, embrigadés et ligotés par la censure. Ce qu'il faut souhaiter c'est que ce peuple – si plein de bon sens et de patriotisme – ne laisse pas «refaire» son âme (dans tous les sens du mot «refaire»), mais garde l'âme que lui ont faite cent cinquante ans de lutte et de liberté – et que voudrait bien confisquer à leur profit les éternels émigrés de l'intérieur, qui n'ont pas changé depuis Valmy et dont les rangs se sont grossis du stock des bourgeois craignant pour leur coffre-fort.⁵⁰

Werth was well aware of this reign of white terror but his observations from rural Saint-Amour enabled him to appreciate that not only the elite were concerned about the concessions gained by the workers:

Ce gouvernement est tout «vêtu de probité candide et de lin blanc». Il s'enveloppe d'une nuée blanche. Il est voué au blanc, comme une petite fille est vouée au bleu. Ceux du bourg s'en fichent. Ils ne lisent plus les mandements et messages. Mais ils sont de mauvaise humeur et très près de la colère à cause des dernières taxations.⁵¹

Werth was only too aware that the National Revolution was an attempt to halt the workers' encroachment on the rights of the *bourgeoisie*. Yet it is interesting to note that this aroused little or no concern among the peasants of Saint-Amour. They too resented the concessions granted to the workers and so any attempt to check their progress would have been welcomed. What concerned the peasants was the fact that Vichy was interfering with their own interests with regard to requisitions and taxation:

Les paysans d'ici, s'il ne s'agit de restrictions ou réquisitions, sont absolument indifférents à tout ce que dit et fait le gouvernement. Ils ne lisent même pas «la journée à Vichy». Ils s'intéressent au duel entre l'Angleterre et l'Allemagne et, en ce moment, surtout à la guerre italo-grecque... Si bien que tous les actes, mesures, réformes ou projets de Vichy passent inaperçus. Comme si un coup de baguette magique avait rendu invisibles et impalpables les gens de Vichy. Les paysans et les gens du bourg ni ne se réjouissent ni ne s'effrayent de cet hitléro-

⁵⁰ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.132. (12.1.41) See also pp.165-166. (28.5.41)

⁵¹ Werth, *Déposition*, p.84. (8.11.40) and p.87. (11.11.40) See Bernanos, Georges, *Le Chemin de la Croix-des-Ames*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1948) pp.93-94.

*fascisme. Soit qu'ils ne l'identifient pas, soit qu'ils tiennent que Vichy n'est pas dans le coup, que la partie se joue ailleurs.*⁵²

The peasants were largely indifferent to Vichy unless it directly affected their interests. Yet the taxes and requisitions were not tied up with the National Revolution but, rather, with the policy of Collaboration. The armistice included the conditions that the German occupying force would be maintained by the French government and that the Germans would be able to requisition anything and do so legally. Vichy needed an enormous amount of extra revenue and supplies to fund and feed the German occupying force, and the peasants felt the brunt of that squeeze. The National Revolution, however, ostensibly courted the peasants. The policy of *retour à la terre*, for example, which encouraged a return to the traditional rural way of life as opposed to the modern, decadent urban life, was a reversal of fortune for the peasants who had been overshadowed by the rise of the workers in the 1930s. On the one hand, Pétain's efforts, despite being largely ignored, were nonetheless seen by the peasants as a genuinely honest attempt to rebuild France but, on the other hand, the policy of Collaboration, associated with Laval and which directly affected the peasants, caused resentment. Even at an early stage there was a distinction already being made between not only Laval and Pétain but also their respective roles within the Vichy regime. Pétain appeared to be working for the interests of France whereas Laval appeared to be working for the interests of Germany.

The fact that Germany had occupied almost two-thirds of France meant that relations with the Germans would be inevitable. Duméril felt that he could best contribute by gaining the best conditions for France through these contacts. Yet, in his mind, Vichy was taking this too far. It is significant, moreover, to note that Duméril did not include Pétain in the more sinister aspects of Vichy's collaboration with Germany:

*La radio de Vichy a annoncé aussi que les Lorrains de langue française auraient dû quitter dans les 24 heures la Lorraine pour être transportés en Pologne. L'achèvement des pourparlers Laval-Hitler est peut-être la cause de cette sévérité nouvelle. Jamais on n'a vu s'exercer une telle pression sur les peuples vaincus ! On comprend que les populations et surtout les jeunes s'impatientent, mais la seule politique est d'accepter la situation et de s'y adapter diplomatiquement le mieux possible.*⁵³

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.123. (5.12.40)

⁵³ Duméril, *Journal d'un honnête homme pendant l'occupation*, pp.82-83. (14-15.11.40) See p.120. His preferred strategy was: *Attendre, c'est la seule chose à faire, et faire son travail au jour le jour.*

The term collaboration needs further clarification as there were different levels of collaboration. Jackson takes the example of Jean Moulin, who was the prefect of the Eure-et-Loir. He refused to sign a declaration that French Senegalese troops had massacred civilians, which he knew had been caused by German bombing. He was arrested by the Germans but after the potentially embarrassing attempt on his life, he was set free and worked with the Germans thereafter, and instructed the mayors and French population at large on how to best deal with the Germans. He would be dismissed by Vichy and would come to play a key role in the Resistance. Moulin was an example of collaboration, as his official position of prefect required him to collaborate with the Germans. This was collaboration as specified by article 3 of the armistice, which required French civil servants in the Occupied Zone *'to conform to the regulations of the German authorities and collaborate with them in a correct manner'*. Collaboration, in this spirit, was totally distinct from the policy of Collaboration, which Vichy would come to pursue.⁵⁴ Duméril was another who genuinely believed that France could work with Germany and, unlike Moulin, he would 'collaborate' with the Germans for the entire Occupation. Yet he, like Drieu⁵⁵ and Rist⁵⁶, was invited to work for Vichy but would turn down the offer: *"Pas le temps de m'en occuper, et neutralité absolue de ma part."*⁵⁷ It is significant that despite the fact that he worked daily alongside the Germans, he would think that Collaboration, in the sense of Vichy's policy, was out of the question.

It took a while for Vichy's policy of Collaboration to become established and recognised. The notion of a double game, aided by the image of Pétain, cast doubt over whether Collaboration was merely a ruse. Collaboration was formalised with the meeting of Hitler at Montoire in October 1940 and the veil of uncertainty over Vichy's intentions was lifted. What is noticeable from the reading of the private diaries is that Vichy was often seen as a greater evil than the German presence. The defeat was hard to tolerate but the emergence of Vichy's designs was even more of a bitter pill to swallow:

⁵⁴ Jackson, *The dark years*, pp.166-168. There was also political collaboration, as espoused by the Paris collaborationists, and economic collaboration.

⁵⁵ Drieu, *Journal*, p.272. (21.9.41)

⁵⁶ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.186. (13.9.41)

⁵⁷ Duméril, *Journal d'un honnête homme pendant l'occupation*, p.129. (9.3.41)

*Même je vais jusqu'à croire préférable pour un temps, la sujétion allemande; avec ses pénibles humiliations, moins préjudiciable pour nous, moins dégradante que la discipline que nous propose aujourd'hui Vichy.*⁵⁸

France had been defeated and so the German military presence was inescapable. Yet Vichy had made the conscious choice of collaborating with Germany. Rist, on reading about the Montoire meetings between Laval and Hitler and Pétain and Hitler on October 22 and October 24 1940 respectively, remarked:

*Tout le monde est silencieux et comme consterné! Humiliation nouvelle? Descente plus bas dans l'abîme? La radio anglaise, les échos des Etats-Unis, nous montrent ces pays de plus en plus irrités contre le gouvernement de Vichy.*⁵⁹

The existence of Vichy and the Unoccupied Zone may have given the illusion of independence, albeit to a limited degree, but the longer the policy of Collaboration was practised with no rewards for France, the more difficult this illusion was to maintain. Guéhenno, in the preface to his diary, argued that Vichy's very existence was a temptation to collaborate with Germany on a higher level:

*J'avais trop raison en juin 1940 de craindre que la servitude ne fût pour les jeunes gens une plus grande épreuve encore que la guerre. Le crime de l'ex-maréchal Pétain a été de faire pour tout un peuple du déshonneur une tentation. Il n'est pas pire crime contre l'homme que de le tenter dans sa bassesse et sa lâcheté. Mais surtout il n'est pas pire crime contre de jeunes hommes. Je les ai vus se débattre dans cette honte qui leur était proposée.*⁶⁰

The French population, however, did nothing to change the situation. The danger was, as Werth pointed out, that this muted indifference could be interpreted as acceptance:

*La France – ce que d'ici je puis voir et présumer de la France – se laisse museler par Vichy, comme un chien docile. Elle ne peut échapper, il faut qu'elle consente à la muselière. Mais du moins pourrait-elle grogner?*⁶¹

The key question remains: why did this dissatisfaction with Vichy's direction not lead to an overthrow of the Vichy regime? Werth would often wonder whether the French would attempt to channel their anger into open dissidence:

Existe-t-il, contre Vichy, un sens populaire de la nation? Et trouvera-t-il son occasion? Dans une levée en masse, emportant tout? Dans une guerre civile? Car le maréchal, fabriquant son entité de révolution nationale sur une miette du

⁵⁸ Gide, *Journal*, p.76. (6.5.41)

⁵⁹ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.100. (26.10.40) and Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.58. (24.10.40)

⁶⁰ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.13.

⁶¹ Werth, *Déposition*, p.209. (21.5.41)

*territoire, a préparé d'assez bonnes conditions de guerre civile, pour le cas où l'Allemagne vaincue ou renonçante ne pourrait entériner ses messages.*⁶²

If Vichy aroused more anger than solace why did the French refuse to at least *grogner*? The circumstances that led to its existence go some way to explaining this appearance of acceptance. Yet the situation in which the French found themselves after the defeat cannot be discounted. The Occupied Zone contained the overwhelming majority of workers in France and although they suffered the most out of all the social groups, the fear of unemployment was a great motivator in preventing them from voicing their concerns. Moreover, the Occupied Zone was controlled by the German military and to rise up against the Germans was not the same as overthrowing a government. The fact that the so-called *zone libre* was free from the German military might well have made those living there more hesitant about changing the status quo. Although Vichy spoke for all of France, its influence was felt much less in the Occupied Zone, which contained the majority of the French population.⁶³

Yet the other question that needs to be asked is what would have replaced the Vichy regime? There seemed to be no other alternative, and any attempt to do so would have incurred the wrath of the Germans:

*La politique de Vichy, c'est l'intégration de la France à l'Allemagne. Le pays la repousse mollement, la réprouve. Mais c'est un mouvement intime, une réprobation intérieure. Il ne résiste pas et sans doute il ne peut résister. Et c'est face à mon papier que depuis six mois je résiste.*⁶⁴

Werth realised that it was impossible to actively resist either Vichy or the Germans and that one had to adopt a more subtle form of resistance. The trouble was that such a form of resistance was not easy to detect and left those who practised it open to reproach. Werth, for example, talked about resisting through his writing but he did not publish clandestinely his material like Guéhenno or Mauriac did. Inwardly he may have been defiant but outwardly he differed little from those he was criticising for being too acquiescent. This ostensible acquiescence enabled Paxton to portray the French population at large as 'functional collaborators'. Unless one was exposed to the true private feelings of the individual, it was impossible to differentiate from those who were

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.182. (4.3.41)

⁶³ Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*, p.89.

⁶⁴ Werth, *Déposition*, p.128. (9.12.40)

resigned to the defeat and those who were struggling against it each day. As Guéhenno pointed out in February 1941, it was difficult to sort the French people into categories, although he believed that, in general, the French people saw past the motives of Vichy:

*Quel génie devront avoir les historiens de l'avenir pour reconnaître les vraies causes et les vrais mobiles des événements dans ces textes, ces communiqués, dont pas un mot n'est loyal, ni exact. Et que veut-on qu'aujourd'hui même le peuple, dans son ensemble, y comprenne. Mais son instinct le sauve. De tant de tergiversations il conclut seulement avec une totale sûreté que Laval est l'homme de Hitler et que la collaboration n'est qu'un beau mot pour la servitude.*⁶⁵

It would take time for the French to realise that Vichy's collaboration with Germany was not gaining any concessions for France. When Rist still had no news at the end of October 1940 of his son, who had been taken prisoner of war after the armistice, it is clear his patience had run out for a regime that was supposedly trying to protect the French:

*Qui jamais pardonnera au gouvernement de Vichy son incurie et son impudence dans le mensonge? Je le tiens pour personnellement responsable du sort de mon fils qui n'aurait jamais dû être prisonnier, ayant été pris après l'armistice. Je tiens Laval et Baudouin pour personnellement responsables de ce qu'il souffre et souffrira. Je les tiens pour personnellement responsables des souffrances de froid et de faim qu'ils font subir à mes enfants et petits-enfants. Pour personnellement responsables d'ajouter à ces souffrances les mensonges cyniques qu'ils font paraître dans leurs journaux. Pour personnellement responsables de la prolongation de ces souffrances par l'aide qu'ils font donner à l'Allemagne par notre industrie. Pour personnellement responsables de la dégradation intellectuelle qu'ils imposent à nos journaux et qui nous maintiendrait dans une ignorance totale de ce qui se passe sans la radio américaine et anglaise. Il est impossible de penser que le jour de la vengeance ne viendra pas et que ces cyniques provocateurs et profiteurs de la défaite de la France ne seront pas punis.*⁶⁶

The point to remember is that there had already been much oscillation in opinion by 1941. The Mers-el-Kébir incident, which had seen the British Navy open fire and sink part of the French Fleet, had caused much Anglophobia but the meeting of Hitler at Montoire, where it appeared Laval and Pétain were courting Hitler under the guise of

⁶⁵ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, pp.100-101. (10.2.41) See Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*, p.9. It is interesting to note the evolution of the word *collaboration*. Until 1940, it simply meant a common work or participation in a common work. Yet in a very short time it came to mean betrayal for the profit of the invader or at the very least submitting to an occupying power, which clearly illustrates that collaboration was roundly rejected by the French.

⁶⁶ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.111. (12.12.40)

collaboration, had caused much despair amongst the French. Out of this came the directive to ban any British radio broadcast. Pétain's speech on October 30, 1940 would help to calm things down, in which he mentioned that he had refused to bow to immense German pressure. But the expulsion of those from Lorraine and the violent reprisals against students protesting in Paris on Armistice Day would undermine this.⁶⁷ However, underneath this oscillation in opinion was the belief that Collaboration was more of a reflection on Vichy than the German occupying force. It was Vichy that suggested collaboration as the best path forward for France; it would seem that the French population was not convinced. Yet opinion towards Vichy cannot be fully understood without an examination of the diarists' reactions towards the Germans.

The Germans: *invasion des rats*.

Just as it took Vichy time to establish itself, and just as its influence affected different regions and individuals to differing degrees, so too did the German invasion and subsequent occupation affect France to varying degrees. The French living in the north-east had already experienced German occupation during the First World War. In that sense, they were more prepared for what lay ahead of them. Those living in the Unoccupied Zone, however, had no first-hand experience of life under German occupation and this would remain so until November 1942, when the Germans would occupy all of France. The "*invasion des rats*"⁶⁸, as Guéhenno put it, would take time to reach all of France. It would, consequently, take time to fully appreciate the ramifications of the Occupation. Mauriac would write in *Le Figaro* in June 1940: "*Les Français du Nord, dont les maisons furent détruites en 1914 et 1940, je croyais les plaindre. Aujourd'hui seulement, je comprends: leur douleur nous restait étrangère.*"⁶⁹ This would explain the attitude of the diarist Roussin, living in Marseilles, who was oblivious to the suffering of those in the Occupied Zone: "*Tout ce qui restait tragique dans le reste de la France semblait presque oublié ou du moins ne plus concerner ceux que le sort gratifiait*

⁶⁷ Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy*, pp.239-243.

⁶⁸ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.17. (22.6.40)

⁶⁹ Mauriac, *Œuvres complètes*, p.308. (23.6.40)

de ce ciel bleu et de cette apparente liberté."⁷⁰ Moreover, the attitude of the Germans was different towards the French than the people of many other occupied territories. There was no intention of erasing France from the European map. Hitler's intention was to exploit France ruthlessly but at the same time keep up the pretence that normal everyday life could continue. Roussin illustrates how those living in the Unoccupied Zone would have been especially inclined to believe that the German occupation would not affect their lives.

The initial reactions of the diarists to their first encounter with the Germans are useful to analyse. Toesca made the very astute remark: "*Ce qui est important c'est l'impression première. Les hommes n'aiment pas changer d'avis.*"⁷¹ The opinions formed in the initial period of the Occupation would be crucial in shaping the opinions of the French throughout the Occupation. Some actively sought to build good relations with the Germans. Galtier-Boissière noted that the prospect of advancing oneself through German contacts was certainly enticing for some: "*la réconciliation franco-allemande ouvre des perspectives magnifiques.*"⁷² Those who chose to work alongside the Germans, however, were by no means always acting out of self-interest. In the early months of the Occupation, there were posters put up in the Occupied Zone to warn the French not to attack the Germans, as such action would provoke harsh reprisals: "*Que chacun reste à son poste et continue son travail. Ce sera pour lui la meilleure façon de servir sa partie, son peuple et lui-même.*"⁷³ This raises the question whether those who blocked out the German presence were being defiant or submissive? Were those who worked with the Germans out of a desire to best serve France's interests really working in Germany's favour? The language schools, for example, were hit with a sudden surge of interest in learning the German language.⁷⁴ Was this a sign of simple practicality or was it a case of the French going too far? Duméril, who spoke fluent German and worked with the Germans on a daily basis, was convinced that establishing good relations with the German occupiers would be the best option for France. He firmly believed from his first

⁷⁰ Roussin, *Rideau gris et habit vert*, p.99.

⁷¹ Toesca, *Cinq ans de patience*, p.83. (5.9.40)

⁷² Galtier-Boissière, *Journal*, p.13. (26.8.40)

⁷³ Duméril, *Journal d'un honnête homme pendant l'occupation*, p.37. (June 1940)

⁷⁴ Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*, pp.306-308. In 1939, the Berlitz school had 939 German students and 2 470 English students. In the autumn of 1941, these figures had changed to 7 920 and 625 respectively.

encounter with Commander Hotz that not all Germans were Nazis and that it was possible to conduct civilised relations with them. It made no sense to fight them; the best course was to gain the maximum benefit from them until peace in Europe arrived:

Il n'y avait aucune arrogance ni joie de la victoire chez cet homme modeste et cultivé qui semblait refouler en lui-même une douleur poignante. Quand je pris congé de lui, le Commandant serra ma droite dans ses deux mains, d'un geste qui devait être lui familier. «Nous nous trouvons tous les deux, dit-il les larmes aux yeux, dans une situation que nous n'avons pas voulue. Nous essaierons de nous en tirer au mieux des intérêts de nos deux peuples.» J'espère que cette conversation sera utile à tous mes concitoyens en me permettant d'intervenir sans répit en leur faveur.⁷⁵

He believed that the majority of the Nantais population reacted to the first signs of active resistance with overwhelming disapproval.⁷⁶

Toesca was also of the opinion that it was vital that the French had a say in their own affairs:

Administrer, c'est faire répartir par des Français pour des Français, entre Français; c'est assurer la distribution de gaz, d'électricité, d'eau potable, c'est rétablir les écoles, le réseau médical, etc... Autant de questions qui échappent au domaine des politiciens, que nous voulons systématiquement ignorer. Par le travail indispensable de chacun à l'entretien de la communauté française, nous aurons du même coup maintenu la cohésion de tous dans le même idéal: l'espoir de la paix par la libération. Quand? On frémit rien qu'en se posant la question.⁷⁷

The abandoning of one's post may have been perceived favourably after the Liberation but it was certainly not deemed patriotic in the context of 1940. Yet it would take a long time for Duméril to be fully aware of Germany's divisive goal. His cordial relations with Hotz evidently made a lasting impression. He expressed surprise over a statement made by a German attaché: "«Le résultat en Syrie importe peu. Le résultat est atteint de faire battre Anglais et Français». Cette idée est à retenir. Il doit y avoir beaucoup de vrai. En attendant, le désarroi est grand certainement en France; la tristesse aussi."⁷⁸ Toesca,

⁷⁵ Duméril, *Journal d'un honnête homme pendant l'occupation*, p.31. (24-25.6.40) See p.108 He was aware that Nazism was just as oppressive as Communism and needed an extensive police force to repress and keep in check the local population. Yet he also believed that there were sufficient numbers of honest German officials, which would allow fruitful collaboration.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.62.

⁷⁷ Toesca, *Cinq ans de patience*, p.75. (14.7.40)

⁷⁸ Duméril, *Journal d'un honnête homme pendant l'occupation*, p.140. (16.6.41) See also p.109 The Germans got the French to denounce one another. Commander Hotz acknowledged: «Sans les Français, nous n'arriverions pas à en découvrir un seul».

who was in an equally privileged position with respect to his working relationship with the Germans, became aware of Germany's real intentions much earlier:

*Pour la première fois, je comprends ce qu'est la «querelle d'Allemand». Je frémis à la pensée de l'hégémonie qui nous menace. Désormais, tout acte, tout désir allemand m'apparaîtra comme un coup donné à notre liberté. Liberté, peau de chagrin.*⁷⁹

Toesca's view of his work with the German military authorities was different to that of Duméril from the outset. He did not share Duméril's desire to extract the maximum benefit from Germany: "*La politique actuelle consiste à amadouer les Allemands le plus possible, à les détourner des exactions qu'ils sont prêts à commettre.*"⁸⁰ Their ultimate aim may have well been the same – to serve France's interests in the best possible way – but their approach was quite different. Duméril believed that the sinister side of Nazi Germany could be offset by the honest and noble intentions of many German officials, whereas Toesca believed that it was necessary to fool every German.

The German occupation would see many French people working for or alongside the German occupiers. Yet much like the attitude towards Vichy, the overwhelming majority would refuse to actively work towards the goal of forging a partnership between France and Germany. That is not to suggest, however, that the French completely shunned the German occupiers. It is important to consider that the all-important initial reactions were formed by the French whilst they were at their lowest ebb. Werth, in 1942, would recall how so many had been mesmerised by the first sight of the Germans:

*Et je me souviens de cette belle jeune fille, qui, à Chalon, le 13 juillet 1940, la fleur à la bouche, se promenait avec des soldats allemands. Et j'ai vu des bourgeois de petite ville s'ouvrir de tous leurs pores à l'Allemand. J'ai vu la France traumatisée, hypnotisée par le vainqueur, ensorcelée par la botte.*⁸¹

The psychoanalyst Marie Bonaparte argued: "*la haine aggressive avait alors souvent fait place chez les vaincus à une admiration soumise et fascinée pour leurs vainqueurs.*"⁸²

Werth, on his escape to Saint-Amour, observed that the Germans' emphatic victory had softened considerably their notorious reputation of the First World War:

⁷⁹ Toesca, *Cinq ans de patience*, p.79. (30.7.40)

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.82. (25.8.40)

⁸¹ Werth, *Déposition*, p.323. (18.7.42)

⁸² Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*, p.201. See also p.29. The Germans, in their first reports, noted that the French population was *fortement impressionnée par la discipline* and that *de nombreux Français expriment leur appréciation au sujet des rapports de camaraderie qui existent entre officiers et soldats*.

Cette guerre ne s'est point développée comme les autres. On n'y a point créé de la haine par images d'Epinal. Il est assez remarquable que l'on n'entende presque plus le mot «Boches» et que les Allemands soient devenus les Allemands. Mais ce qui me paraît non moins étonnant, c'est que les femmes ne disent pas les Allemands, mais les soldats. Comme s'il y avait une sorte d'équivalence entre toutes les armées du monde.⁸³

The anticipation of terror, on the whole, did not materialise for the French. The result of this unexpected 'correct' conduct by the Germans, as de Beauvoir observed in Paris, was an acceptance of the German presence:

Comme l'auto s'est arrêtée près d'un pont, un soldat allemand nous lance d'un camion un paquet de chocolat. Il y en a au bord de la route qui causent gaiement avec de jolies filles. Et le type me dit: «Il y aura bien des petits Allemands de fabriqués!» J'ai entendu dix fois cette phrase, et jamais elle n'impliquait de blâme: «C'est la nature, me dit le type, il n'y a pas besoin de parler la même langue pour ça.» Je n'ai vu de haine chez personne; seulement des peurs paniques chez les villageois, et quand la peur s'était dissipée, ils en gardaient l'œil rond et reconnaissant.⁸⁴

Moret, a young girl at an impressionable age, had nevertheless a firm determination to do the honourable thing by France. Yet when she went to fetch some water and encountered two friendly Germans she began to feel something else:

J'arrive à éprouver pour eux une espèce de haine artificiellement excitée. Pourtant, ils sont tellement simples qu'on ne sent pas en eux des vainqueurs. En outre, je n'ai pas particulièrement une âme de vaincue.⁸⁵

Her first instinct was to shun the German invaders yet she discovered that the identities of the vanquished and conqueror were not readily recognisable. Familiarity with the Germans would only further blur these identities. The cafes, for example, were an area of socialising where the Germans assumed a familiar role. The historian Louis Chevalier observed in his village of Vendée that whilst the peasants drank at home, the sailors kept their habit of drinking at the port hotel:

Dans les premiers temps, ils avaient fait semblant de ne pas voir les Allemands, de faire comme s'ils n'étaient pas là. [...] Et puis, à force de se rencontrer, d'échanger des paperasses et de boire à part les uns des autres, on avait fini par

⁸³ Werth, *33 jours*, p.118. See Jackson, *The dark years*, p.273. It should be noted that those from the north-east not only remembered atrocities committed during World War One but also those carried out in 1940. 98 civilians, for example, were massacred at Aubigny-en-Artois on May 22, 1940.

⁸⁴ De Beauvoir, *La force de l'âge*, pp.467-468.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.59. (27.6.40)

*trinquer et, quand on avait un peu bu, par se tutoyer et par s'appeler par son petit nom.*⁸⁶

In the first weeks after the defeat, the diarists observed that the French often responded to the Germans with relief, surprise and curiosity: relief that the fighting was over; surprise at the 'correct' conduct of the Germans; curiosity to see these triumphant conquerors. Soup kitchens were set up by the Germans to provide relief to the refugees and locals. Posters stressed that the French had nothing to fear and were asked to place their trust in the German soldier. In Paris, the Germans carried cameras as often as guns, and one observer wondered if they were a beauty chorus reserved for triumphal entries.⁸⁷ Women refugees caught up in the Exodus, who had smeared themselves with mustard to burn soldiers who might rape them, were pleasantly surprised to see the 'correct' manner of the German soldiers in stark contrast with the haggard French soldiers. In his preface to *33 jours*, Werth wrote: "*c'était le temps où ils étaient «corrects», qui précède le temps où ils nous donnèrent des «leçons de politesse»*"⁸⁸ This period of correctness was only a moment in the overall scheme of the Occupation but it left a marked impression that outlasted this brief period. Thérive's observation of the Germans in October 1940 is an example of someone still transfixed by the Germans, who represented freshness and order to France's staleness and disarray:

*Il fait beau. Les terrasses des cafés regorgent de consommateurs qui, d'un air narquois, regardent passer les occupants. La plupart des soldats sont maigres, vêtus de pauvre étoffe et leur teint grisâtre contraste avec celui des vaincus. Les infirmières sont d'une rare inélégance, et on les a déjà surnommées: les bonniches. En revanche, beaucoup de jeunes officiers de belle stature et de type archange, dont on admire les imperméables gris et les capes.*⁸⁹

Jünger socialised with many French people and argued that many did so of their own free will. He never felt any overt hatred towards him during his time in Paris in the first year of the Occupation:

Je dois dire d'ailleurs que le séjour à Paris m'a été profitable aussi par la quantité de rencontres qu'il m'a fait faire. Les êtres cachent encore en eux

⁸⁶ Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*, p.207.

⁸⁷ P. Audiat, *Paris pendant la guerre, juin 1940 – août 1944*, p.27, Jackson, *The dark years*, p.272.

⁸⁸ Werth, *33 jours*, p.9.

⁸⁹ Thérive, *L'envers du décor*, pp.32-33. (October 1940) See Bloch, *L'étrange défaite*, p.124. Even Bloch admired the harmonious relationship between German officers and soldiers.

*beaucoup de bons grains qui germeront à nouveau dès que le temps s'adoucira et reprendra des températures humaines.*⁹⁰

The effects of this 'correct' behaviour, however, must be qualified. The conduct of the Germans was a surprise but this did not mean that the French welcomed the Germans with open arms. They were still the enemy but in the summer of 1940 most people were too traumatised to think beyond the problem of getting home or retracing relatives split by the zones or taken prisoner by the Germans. What mattered was that the fighting was over; the conduct of the Germans was an unexpected bonus. People knew what the Armistice had ended but they had no conception of what it had begun. Peace would not come in time to soften opinion sufficiently towards the Germans for genuine collaboration. From the other perspective, many diarists realised the danger of Germany's lenient approach in the initial stage of the Occupation. To concentrate on their correct conduct or their restoration of order was to forget that they were the sworn enemy:

*C. a exprimé aujourd'hui l'opinion des Français éclairés: «Les Allemands sont encore trop gentils avec nous. Il faudrait qu'ils nous serrent la vis pour qu'on comprenne. C'est le seul moyen que nous ayons pour nous relever de notre chute et de notre effondrement moral.»*⁹¹

Moreover, the 'correct' behaviour of the Germans was often ambiguous. As Werth remarked, first appearances were not always what they seemed:

*Nous sommes «entretenus». Les soldats distribuent des boîtes de singe, de sardines, de «salmon», du chocolat, des bonbons. Mais tout est de marque française. Tout vient de Rouen ou d'Orléans, tout a été pillé.*⁹²

That is not to say that one should discount the significance of the 'correct' German conduct but, rather, that one should place it within the overall scheme of things. Mauriac was willing to forgive the initial curiosity demonstrated by the French, particularly those living in the Unoccupied Zone:

Ayez des yeux pour ne point voir.» C'est le mot d'ordre à donner aux Français devant l'occupation étrangère. Il ne faut certes pas se scandaliser de ce que, dans nos villages, les gens n'aient pas d'abord tous fermé leurs volets, ni de ce que le bruit des lourds camions allemands les ait, un instant, attirés sur les seuils. Dans notre Sud-Ouest, surtout, le coup était trop inattendu pour qu'ils le

⁹⁰ Jünger, *Premier journal parisien*, (Paris: Christian Bourgois Editeur, 1980) p.40. (14.6.41) Jünger rarely wore his uniform, however, which might well have influenced the opinion of those he encountered.

⁹¹ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, pp.191-2. (31.1.41)

⁹² Werth, *33 jours*, p.124. See also p.90. The Germans loot only abandoned French property.

*sentent déjà. Ils n'étaient pas préparés à cette espèce de malheur. Les anciens ne leur ont pas transmis avec le sang, comme dans les provinces du Nord et de l'Est, l'horreur de l'invasion. Ils ne l'avaient jamais connue. Les défilés de troupes allemandes, ce n'était guère pour eux un effet de cinéma. Ce la faisait partie d'un pittoresque sinistre qui ne concernait personne entre la Loire et les Pyrénées.*⁹³

Yet he was equally quick to point out that this initial curiosity could no longer be tolerated. These words came more from a desire to tell the French what to do rather than what the French were actually doing. Very few adopted the position of Guéhenno: "*Je ne veux rien écrire ici de ces hommes gris que je commence à croiser dans les rues. C'est l'invasion des rats.*"⁹⁴ Moret was much less forgiving than Mauriac, and believed that the curiosity displayed by the French signified a shameful resignation to the defeat:

*Je comprends maintenant les rires des Allemands quand, à leur arrivée, ils trouvaient la foule massée le long des rues – et c'est tout juste si elle ne souhaitait pas la bienvenue. Il y avait autre chose dans ces rires qu'une gentillesse naturelle. Mon Dieu, que nous avons été lâches! Si le drame avait pu être moins rapide! Mais il y a longtemps que nos détachements, à la frontière, ont été sacrifiés inutilement.*⁹⁵

What must be remembered is that such observations belie the overall sentiment of the French towards the Germans. A Wehrmacht report in September 1940 claimed: "*La population est dans l'ensemble calme, à l'occasion accueillante, mais la plupart du temps réservée, souvent inamicale et en partie même hostile.*"⁹⁶ After the initial shock of defeat and despite the anti-British propaganda surrounding the Mers-el-Kébir incident, opinion had by autumn become pro-British and anti-German. This is confirmed by every source which monitored public opinion, whether it be in the south or the north.⁹⁷ Yet equally it should not be said that after the initial shock of the first weeks there was a conscious and constant rejection of the Germans. Just as French opinion, shaped by events, oscillated with respect to Vichy, so too did events shape opinion towards the

⁹³ Mauriac, *Œuvres complètes*, p.309. (29.6.40)

⁹⁴ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.17. (22.6.40) See also Deharme, *Les années perdues*, pp.58-60. (9.7.40) The Germans took something far more valuable than French soil: her memories and impressions were shattered by the invasion.

⁹⁵ Moret, *Journal d'une mauvaise Française*, p.70. (22.9.40)

⁹⁶ Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*, p.188.

⁹⁷ Jackson, *The dark years*, pp.274-275. Anti-German feeling was initially most intense in the forbidden zone but the rest of the Occupied Zone soon followed suit. The expulsion of the Lorrainers in November would turn the tide of opinion in the Unoccupied Zone. Almost unanimously pro-British was how the pro-Vichy prefect of Ariège described his *département* in February 1941.

Germans. Rist felt proud of the initial Parisian reaction to the Germans,⁹⁸ yet with the passage of time – and the slow, uncertain and confused nature of that passage of time – he noticed that the accumulation of German victories had a demoralising effect:

*Incertitude de l'avenir. Le gros public se laisse impressionner par les victoires allemandes. Il se décourage. Les journaux français nazis essayent d'en tirer parti en faveur de Laval. Car Darlan ne leur suffit plus. Il leur re-faut Laval.*⁹⁹

Similarly, Guéhenno may have been impressed with the initial reaction of the Parisians towards the Germans: “*Je suis content des Parisiens. Ils croisent les Allemands comme ils croisent les chiens et les chats. Il semble qu'ils ne les voient, ni ne les entendent.*”¹⁰⁰ Yet it did not take him long to recognise that food restrictions would make many resign themselves to the defeat: “*ce peuple ne pense, ne sent, ne veut plus rien. Quinze jours suffirent pour faire de lui un troupeau.*”¹⁰¹ In the queue for his ration card, Guéhenno was appalled to hear that the people were without hope and resigned to the defeat – “*les gens ont la tête aussi vide que le ventre*” – to the extent that some were hoping that the English would be defeated too so that France's situation did not seem so shameful. Survival seemed to be the preoccupation and for many the sole preoccupation.

The fact that the French appeared to be solely preoccupied with survival does not mean that they were any more favourably disposed to the Germans. Certainly their tendency to concentrate on obtaining food and supplies would have diverted their focus away from the growing sinister nature of Nazism yet it is important to consider that the first year of the Occupation would not see the shooting of hostages in great numbers or the mass internment of Jews. It was precisely through the food and coal shortages that the French would experience the impact of the German presence in France. Children were encouraged to alleviate the food crisis by foraging for acorns and chestnuts. They were also encouraged to root out the Colorado beetle, or *doryphore*, which had recently arrived from America and caused crop destruction.¹⁰² It is significant that the term

⁹⁸ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.107. (23.11.40)

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.156. (20.4.41) See also p.86: *D'ici à quelques mois, le bon sens reprendra le dessus, parce qu'on préférera tout à l'envahisseur. Mais en attendant! [...] Contradictions et confusions! C'est bien le résultat cherché par l'ennemi.* (28.7.40) See also Werth, *Déposition*, p.41. (6.9.40) and p.85. (8.11.40)

¹⁰⁰ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.41 (7.9.40) See Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.96: *Dans la rue, les gens qui passent à côté des soldats font semblant de ne pas les voir et de les considérer comme «non existants».* (6.10.40)

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.45. (19.9.40)

¹⁰² Jackson, *The dark years*, p.259.

doryphore came to be used as a slang term for the Germans. The French may not have fully realised the true sinister nature of Nazism but they certainly were aware that the German presence was causing the French undue suffering. The extent of that suffering, however, would only be revealed with the passage of time.

Part Two

The awakening

*L'histoire n'est pas du tout, comme nous en avons l'illusion, une suite de tableaux d'histoire, dont les modèles ont bien posé. Elle est faite d'incohérents mélanges et d'anachronismes.*¹⁰³

Le juif absent.

The first year of the Occupation was a relatively benign period for the French. The Germans were eager to create a good impression and the French, for the most part, were unwilling to rock the boat. Some diarists would adopt a hostile attitude towards both Vichy and the Germans at a very early stage but it would take more time for other diarists to be awakened to the more sinister aspects of the Occupation as well as Vichy's complicit role. One particular sinister area historians have chosen to focus on is the persecution of Jews during the Occupation. Yet when examining the diaries written during the period, one is struck by how little the Jewish issue is mentioned. The fate of a small but significant part of the French population appears to have provoked a telling absence of reflection. Even examining the diary of Werth, who was a Jew himself, reveals surprisingly little on the matter considering his Jewish origins were the very reason why he was forced into exile to Saint-Amour. The seemingly sparse reflection on the Jewish issue by a Jew is telling. That is in no way to suggest that the Jewish question is of little relevance but the question needs to be asked why the diaries contain so few references to the fate of the Jews.

History from above appears to have focused entirely on the issue of whether Vichy was equally responsible for the fate of the Jews living in France as the Nazi regime. While the Germans embarked on their extermination of all the Jews in Europe after January 1942, anti-Semitic legislation had already been introduced by Vichy without any

¹⁰³ Werth, *Déposition*, p.288. (14.5.42)

persuasion by the German occupying force. The research of Paxton was instrumental in negating the myth that Jewish persecution was imposed on Vichy against its will but it seems to have ignored the wider issue of how the French population felt about their own country's participation in the persecution of the Jews. One must make not only the distinction between the Nazi aim for extermination and the discriminatory legislation introduced by Vichy but also Vichy's policies and the French reaction to them. Moreover, it is not always what the diarists chose to talk about that is significant but also what they chose not to talk about.¹⁰⁴ There seems to be an imbalance on how much the historians devote to the Jewish question and how much the diarists wrote on anything concerning the Jews. As the historian Denis Peschanski argued: "*l'image du Juif est plus importante que le Juif lui-même et cette absence de l'autre est décisive dans la construction des fantasmes.*"¹⁰⁵ Was this 'absence' due to the climate of fear in a time where denunciation was rife or incriminating evidence could have serious consequences? Was it due to the difficulties of ascertaining other people's opinion on the matter when people preferred to keep their own thoughts to themselves for fear of persecution themselves? Did it represent the cult of individuality born out of the Exodus and the *débâcle*? Did it reflect an inability to appreciate the suffering of other people? Was it due to anti-Semitic propaganda bandied about by both Vichy and the Germans? Or was it simply a matter of indifference to the Jewish people, who had endured discrimination and persecution well before the Occupation? Was this simply a *nouvelle affaire Dreyfus*? The diaries may well not hold all the answers to these questions but it appears that such questions need to be raised more than History from above has been willing to examine. A shift in emphasis is required: the fate of the Jews is equally important to consider at the level of the average French citizen. This section, therefore, is expressly concerned with examining the diarists' reflections on the persecution of the Jews and notably those of Rist, Guéhenno and Werth. It may be valuable to first consider why the other diarists overwhelmingly chose not to write about the Jews but it is also instructive to consider why these three diarists were the only ones who consistently chose to write about the Jews.

¹⁰⁴ Güssdorf, *Auto-bio-graphie*, pp.72-73. The diarists who can write about anything they choose, must first organise their thoughts and write about what they feel to be the most important to them.

¹⁰⁵ Jackson, *The dark years*, pp.277-278.

Furthermore, the reason why this section is included in this chapter is that these diarists, and indeed others later on such as Bobkowski, observed that during this period an important change in thinking took place. This change in thinking did not necessarily see a change in behaviour. Yet there was a marked change from the indifference shown by the French to the anti-Semitic legislation introduced by Vichy in 1940 and the discriminatory measures adopted by the Germans in the Occupied Zone to the consternation and fear expressed after the round-ups, or *rafles*, of Jews, which took place in 1941 and 1942. A major change in attitude took place: the Jews went from being scapegoats to being perceived as victims. The enemy within had become just another French victim of German oppression. The deportation of the Jews helped to make it clear that the real enemy was Germany, which started the first tentative us-against-them mentality not previously seen in the first year of the Occupation. The severe measures taken by the Germans during the second year of the Occupation encouraged the idea that every French citizen was a potential victim of German oppression. Moreover, Vichy's complicit role in the deportation of the Jews reinforced the fear that the French people would be abandoned by the Vichy regime. The French may have felt powerless to defy the Germans or Vichy but there was a definite marked increase in sympathy for the Jews living in France:

*On a également annoncé aujourd'hui qu'à partir du 8 juin, les juifs de toute la zone occupée devront porter une étoile jaune sur la poitrine, côté cœur. Ils pourront se procurer ces étoiles dans leurs commissariats de police contre deux coupons de leur carte textile. Ces deux coupons m'ont mis dans tous mes états. Les Français ont des sourires de pitié. Il faut vraiment avoir un grain. Quand on a besoin des Français et qu'on veut les inciter à collaborer, pour publier pareil décret et parader ainsi devant la nation qui a tout de même publié la Déclaration des droits de l'Homme et qui en est encore aujourd'hui tout imprégnée. C'est tragique, répugnant et désespéré.*¹⁰⁶

Yet, at the same time, it appeared that the average French citizen was more afraid that he or she might meet the same fate as the French Jews than expressing a genuine sympathy for their plight.

What is very much noticeable from the reading of the diaries is this 'absence' of the Jew. There were some diarists who gave the Jewish matter merely a fleeting attention and there were those who made no mention of the Jews at all. At the other extreme, there

¹⁰⁶ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, pp.332-333. (1.6.42)

were those, like Lucien Rebatet, whose diatribe, *Les décombres*, was filled with venom and hatred towards the Jews, and delight that after their alleged rise in the years of the Popular Front, Vichy was intent on stamping out their perceived perfidious intentions.¹⁰⁷ The fact that this work was unashamedly published demonstrates that there was a significant anti-Semitic audience within France. It is worth considering, however, why diarists of less extreme views chose to leave out any talk of the Jews. If we take the diary of Duméril, for example, it is replete with references to his work in trying to defend communist prisoners and the German attempts to expel the communist threat in France. Such is indeed the work of a *honnête homme*, as his title suggests, yet it seems difficult to imagine that a man who had inside access to information on prisoners was not equally informed about Jewish arrests or prisoners. There is a conspicuous absence of any reference to the Jews in his diary. The one brief allusion to the Jews he makes is when he announces the Jewish Statutes in October 1940 in a matter-of-fact style with no reaction of his own.¹⁰⁸ Even when one takes into account the fact that the Jews were not spread evenly around France but, rather, concentrated in specific and usually urban areas, this does not explain why there should be such a glaring absence of reflection on the persecution of the Jews by a man who worked so tirelessly for those whose actions and political sympathies he had little sympathy for. Was any reference to the Jews an acknowledgement by the diarist that one was aware of the problem and, therefore, somehow complicit in their persecution? Does the absence of reflection on the Jews mean that the diarists preferred to keep quiet about the problem so that they could say after the war that they were not involved in what Vichy was openly advocating? Or does it suggest that they approved of the direction taken by Vichy? Or were they so caught up in their own problems that they did not spend time to reflect on the persecution of others? Is their silence, therefore, damning or merely a reflection of their ignorance?

In order to answer these questions, one needs to take into consideration the diarists' motivation for writing their diaries. Rist argued:

Parfois je me dis que ce journal est bien inutile, et sera peut-être pour moi dans l'avenir le témoin de mes propres erreurs de jugement. Même s'il doit être cela je ne regretterai pas de l'avoir rédigé et d'avoir gardé la mémoire de nos

¹⁰⁷ Rebatet, Lucien, *Les mémoires d'un fasciste*, (Paris: Pauvert, 1976) This work is a reprinting of his diatribe, *Les décombres*, together with some of the author's unpublished memoirs.

¹⁰⁸ Duméril, *Journal d'un honnête homme pendant l'occupation*, pp.66-67. (2-5.10.40)

*impressions au jour le jour pendant une époque aussi affreuse, et qu'on sera pressé d'oublier quand la paix sera venue. Ce sera peut-être la mesure de nos illusions, peut-être aussi la mesure de ce que nous aurons pu garder de bon sens dans la tourmente.*¹⁰⁹

There would be a good deal of impatience to forget about Vichy's role in the persecution of the Jews after the Liberation, which might well explain the historians' emphasis on this particular issue. Yet the last sentence is equally significant: many diarists chose to write about what got them through the Occupation rather than what brought them down. The title of Guitry's diary *Quatre ans d'occupations* would suggest that he was too busy to concern himself about the plight of the Jews because his work was the means of getting through the Occupation. In his case, he was motivated by a desire to clear his name, which had been muddied after his arrest in 1944. He found it strange that the Jews after the Liberation were concerned primarily with finding those directly responsible for the persecution of the Jews and not also with those who were too afraid to defend or help them. He claims that he was one of only two actors who openly pleaded their case.¹¹⁰ Yet the following remark questions how sensitive he really was to what happened to the Jews: "*Drancy pendant ou après l'Occupation? Si j'avais su, j'y serais allé, ma foi, du temps des Allemands. Cela doit être moins hideux d'être interné par l'ennemi que d'être écroué par les siens.*"¹¹¹ Guitry was referring to the Drancy camp, which was used to intern prisoners arrested by the French authorities after the Liberation, but during the Occupation the Germans had used it to intern Jews before they were sent to concentration camps. To suggest that his fate was worse than that of the Jews is very much in poor taste. Yet at least he was sufficiently aware of the Jewish issue to comment upon it. It is worth asking the question why this was the case. The reason why Guitry raised the issue, and someone very similar like Cocteau did not, may have been that Guitry wrote his *auto-justification* after the Liberation. The Jewish issue was perhaps of more relevance at this time of recrimination and finger-pointing than during the Occupation, where there appeared to be more pressing concerns.

Equally, it is interesting to note the diarists who did give the Jewish concern some attention. By concentrating on the diarists who seemed more concerned by the plight of

¹⁰⁹ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.170. (17.6.41)

¹¹⁰ Guitry, Sacha, *Quatre ans d'occupations*, (Paris: L'Elan, 1947) p.66.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.265.

the Jews, it may shed light on why the majority of the diarists preferred to remain silent on the issue. Guéhenno, Werth and Rist fall into the former category and it is no surprise that all three diarists were committed to their writing and wrote rich and full texts. Furthermore, it is interesting to note the title of their respective diaries: *Les années noires*, *Déposition* and *Une saison gâtée*. It would follow that these diaries, which had as their goal the systematic exposure of all the bad aspects of the Occupation, should include the persecution of the Jews. That does not mean to say that those who chose to write on the persecution of the Jews were heroes and those who chose to keep silent on the matter were villains. People were motivated to write by different things and indeed one could become a hero with one's actions more often than with one's words. Furthermore, there is still an imbalance between how much these diarists devoted their writing to the Jews and how much the historians devote their research to the matter but that in itself is significant.

It suggests that there is still a good deal of bitterness amongst the Jewish survivors today and a lack of reconciliation with the wider French national community, who also had unanswered grievances. Marcel Ophüls' film, *Le chagrin et la pitié*, delighted in exposing French attempts to rewrite their past. The film was released in cinemas in 1971 but its intended screening on television was prevented for ten years.¹¹² It was an indication of how the French state was unwilling to face up to Vichy's involvement in the deportation of the Jews. Indeed, the French never faced up to their wartime past in any sustained or systematic way. The purges after the Liberation were by no means comprehensive or systematic. In the interests of national unity, de Gaulle preferred to move on from *les années noires* rather than confront the shameful past. There was no Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as there would be in South Africa, for the French to openly express their anger and remorse.¹¹³ Werth himself, in 1943, acknowledged the problem of how to deal with all those who had been involved, directly or indirectly, in the persecution of the Jews:

La radio anglaise donne d'atroces détails sur la vie des Français et des Françaises parqués près de Kattowitz, en Silésie. La guerre gagnée. Comment punira-t-on ceux qui ont ordonné, ceux qui ont exécuté? Et ceux qui,

¹¹² Jackson, *The dark years*, p.2

¹¹³ Gildea, *Marianne in chains*, pp.2-5.

*Allemands ou Français, ont, par leur silence, consenti? Ceux qui ont nié l'atroce, parce qu'il était dangereux ou intolérable de le connaître, de le regarder en face? Punira-t-on la torture par la torture? Par la mort? Déchaînera-t-on la cruauté en la punissant? Inventera-t-on une forme nouvelle de représailles, qui n'avilisse ni ceux qui les ordonnent, ni ceux qui les exécutent? Ou tout sera-t-il oublié, tout se perdra-t-il dans le souci des constructions économiques, dans la fureur de vivre et de manger, dans la frénésie de danser, dans l'obéissance à des rythmes nouveaux, qui ne seront ni celui du fox, ni celui du tango?*¹¹⁴

There is no doubt that the research of Paxton and others was needed in order to set the record straight in terms of exposing the myth that France's involvement in the detainment and deportation of the Jews in France only came from immense German coercion. It is understandable that feelings of betrayal and bitterness endured well after the Occupation. The French Jew, Claude Lévy, was a rare survivor of the Occupation and was understandably bitter towards Vichy. But when he accuses France of collaboration, he confuses the Vichy regime and its police with the rest of France.¹¹⁵

Such a view excludes those who helped the Jews to hide or survive. Stanley Hoffmann was another Jew who survived the Occupation. Although he was only a boy, his general impression was much more favourable than that of Lévy. He makes the important point:

*Sur les balances de l'Histoire, lorsqu'on pourra enfin peser plus équitablement les hommes, leurs actes et les effets de leurs actes, les grandes choses pèseront plus lourd que les médiocres. [...] Dans ma mémoire à moi, le professeur, aujourd'hui âgé de soixante-seize ans et toujours vibrant, qui m'enseigna l'histoire de France, me donna de l'espoir dans les pires jours, sécha mes pleurs quand mon meilleur ami fut déporté avec sa mère, nous fabriqua de faux papiers, à ma mère et à moi, pour que nous puissions fuir une ville infestée par la Gestapo, où la complicité des amis et des voisins n'était plus une protection suffisante, – cet homme efface tous les mauvais moments, et les humiliations, et les terreurs. Sa douce épouse et lui n'étaient pas des héros de la Résistance, mais s'il existe un Français moyen, c'est cet homme-là qui représentait son peuple; et pour cette raison, la France et les Français mériteront toujours notre hommage, et je ne cesserai jamais de les aimer.*¹¹⁶

The complicity of Vichy must not be allowed to overshadow the actions of those French people who could not tolerate Vichy's involvement in the removal or persecution

¹¹⁴ Werth, *Déposition*, pp.510-511. (17-18.8.43) The answers to such questions still continue to remain unanswered in contemporary France, illustrated, for example, by the trial of Maurice Papon for crimes against humanity.

¹¹⁵ Hoffmann, *Essais sur la France*, p.83.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.86-87.

of their fellow citizens. The reverse is equally applicable but History from above tends to look beyond the individual level and privileges the big questions. We might have a thorough understanding of Vichy's role in both saving and removing Jews but the contribution of the French at a popular level remains unclear. The diaries may well provide little insight into the motivations of those French people who aided the Jews but they offer sufficient glimpses to raise the question as to how much credit should be given to the French people, as opposed to Vichy, for the highest rate of Jewish survivors in Western Europe?¹¹⁷ Rist, for example, made no mention in his diary that the Jew, Georges Schneider, was taking refuge in his home in the Haute-Savoie.¹¹⁸ Was this out of concern for his and Schneider's safety or did he simply feel that this was a normal act? Guéhenno admitted that the former applied to him. A friend came to tell him that the Germans had taken away another Jewish friend of his. He did not feel "*libre de tout noter ici*."¹¹⁹ Werth remarked how a hotel owner, who kindly allowed a destitute German Jew to stay for free in her hotel for three months, dismissed her actions: "*Elle semble s'en excuser, craindre que, pour cela, je ne la juge avec sévérité: «C'était une petite chambre, une chambre très modeste...*"¹²⁰ This suggests that the anti-Semitic sentiment amongst the wider French public must have been sufficiently great to excite fear in this woman that she herself might be persecuted for her actions. It also suggests that those people who did aid the Jews were generally unwilling to talk about it, which prevents an understanding of the extent to which such actions occurred.

The Jewish debate has been dominated by a long history of ignorance and fear, which, as Peschanski argued, has helped to create *fantasmes*. In 1942, the *Institut d'études des questions juives* put the number of Jews in France at 1 200 000 and estimated that in a hundred years this figure would be between 10 to 15 million Jews for only 20 to 25 million *authentiques français*. Yet the figure in 1939 was only really about 300 000 and only a slight majority were foreigners. Moreover, their geographical spread

¹¹⁷ See Jackson, *The dark years*, pp.379-381. There is no single cause but, rather, a complex set of determining factors. Yet historians and Paxton and Marrus tend to emphasise the role Germany played – namely the less aggressive stance it took in France compared with other European countries – and overlook the role of the rescue networks in France.

¹¹⁸ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.98. (19.10.40) Rist merely mentions that as a Jew his friend was obliged to leave his work. His refuge is mentioned, rather, in the notes by Jean-Noël Jeanneney.

¹¹⁹ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.139. (16.5.41)

¹²⁰ Werth, *Déposition*, p.194. (3.4.41)

and their discreet behaviour made direct contact with the rest of the inhabitants as limited as possible.¹²¹ Werth would make the observation that the persecution of the Jews during the Occupation was by no means a new phenomenon:

*Inauguration à Paris d'un Institut d'études des questions juives. Si l'on veut juger l'anti-sémitisme, il est absurde, il est bas de le prendre où il touche, il faut le prendre à son point de départ. Car les Juifs sont indéfendables. Tout autant que les Auvergnats, ces empoisonneurs publics, tout autant que les Corses, ces gabelous, ces adjutants. D'ailleurs, il est à remarquer que la foule, aux dénominations ethnologiques, attribue presque toujours un caractère péjoratif. Le Normand est processif, le Breton est brut, le Méridional est lâche et bavard. A tout groupe humain, l'homme-foule oppose d'abord un jugement de défense et de réprobation. Son narcissisme y trouve son compte. Mais s'il s'agit des Juifs, le mot entraîne tout. Il est chargé de souillure par vingt siècles de persécution.*¹²²

The Dreyfus Affair, where a Jewish army captain was wrongly accused of espionage for Germany, had polarised the French nation at the turn of the twentieth century. It was built on existing divisions between Left and Right but certainly it brought out into the open once again the desirability of Jews living in France. The First World War would see this issue lose momentum, as the whole of France came together against a common enemy. The catastrophic defeat in 1940 would reopen debate on this question. It seemed easier to blame a certain section of French society rather than blame the French people collectively. The explanation that France had been led into a *guerre juive* and that the defeat was the fault of the *forces du mal* expanded on the anti-Semitism already felt during the Popular Front years, where the Jew was held responsible for the national identity crisis and where the foreigner was identified as the cause of divisions, and where both were seen as the cause and symptoms of France's decadence. The lines between anti-Semitism and xenophobia were reinforced by the defeat and would continue under Vichy.¹²³

In this respect, it is more appropriate to see the Jewish statutes as a continuation of anti-Semitism rather than as a new development. As in the Dreyfus Affair, France was still very much divided over the Jewish question. Guéhenno recorded the published

¹²¹ Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy*, p.277.

¹²² Werth, *Déposition*, pp.205-206 (16.5.41)

¹²³ Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy*, p.274.

account of the Vichy Commissioner for Jewish Affairs, Xavier Vallat, which aptly shows these lines of division:

*M. Xavier Vallat commente lui-même le nouveau décret qu'il vient de prendre contre les Juifs et qui institue contre eux les mesures les plus sévères. C'est le triomphe du style jésuite. «A ceux, écrit-il, après avoir énuméré les moyens de la terreur, qui trouvent ces mesures insuffisamment radicales, nous répondrons qu'il nous suffit qu'elles soient efficaces et que les effets de la justice sont plus durables que ceux de la persécution. A ceux, au contraire, dont le libéralisme s'effarouche de ce qu'il considère comme une manifestation de sectarisme, nous répondrons que l'antisémitisme n'a jamais été suscité par autre chose que par l'insociabilité et l'inassimilation foncière du juif.»*¹²⁴

Vallat was acknowledging that the statutes would draw both praise and criticism from the French, which clearly suggests that Vichy believed it would be supported by a significant part of the population in its discriminatory policies against the Jews. It is interesting to note that Vallat would defend himself at his trial for collaboration in 1947 by arguing that he had always been an anti-Semite. That he could even consider such a defence is a telling reflection that although the fate of the Jews was not entirely ignored at the Liberation, anti-Semitism in itself was considered secondary to the crime of collaboration.¹²⁵ It also suggests that the popular anti-Semitic sentiment continued not only from the inter-war period but also after the Occupation.

In order to appreciate the change in attitude towards the Jews in the second year of the Occupation, it is necessary to first examine the attitude towards them during the first year of the Occupation. The Jewish statutes of October 1940 constituted the first discriminatory measures taken by Vichy to repress the Jews. This was not something that was forced upon the Vichy government by the Germans but, rather, something it arrived at independently. Evidently, the three diarists focused on in this section fall into the other category of French people, who were appalled at the measures adopted by Vichy. It is interesting to note the Jewish perspective to the Jewish statutes. Werth argued that French Jews did not think in terms of religion over nationality:

Vichy prépare un statut des Juifs. Le Juif de Pologne, du moins il se sentait juif. Les gens du quartier Nalewki à Varsovie ne se concevaient pas comme Polonais. Mais le Juif de France ne se sentait plus juif. Le plus juif de cœur ne l'était que par le souvenir de quelques traditions familiales. S'il était naïf, il ne comprenait pas l'anti-sémitisme, parce qu'il ignorait la méthode politique des

¹²⁴ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.153. (16.6.41)

¹²⁵ Jackson, *The dark years*, pp.354-356.

*abcès de fixation. Ainsi s'explique, sinon se justifie, sa lâcheté ou sa pudeur à s'avouer juif.*¹²⁶

France demanded of its citizens assimilation into the French nation; an unreserved adoption of French culture. Vichy xenophobia, therefore, in a French assimilationist tradition, was more cultural and national than racial.¹²⁷ Yet Werth's reaction clearly suggests that the Jews felt humiliated that their allegiance to the French nation should be brought into question. Darlan confided in Pastor Boegner on 10 March, 1941 that he distinguished three categories of Jews:

*les étrangers, dont je veux que la France soit débarrassée; les naturalisés de fraîche date: qu'on les renvoie, je ne demande pas mieux; enfin, les vieux Juifs français qui sont assimilés, qui ont rendu de grands services au pays. Nous ne voulons pas qu'on les maltraite.*¹²⁸

From Werth's testimony, it appears that these differing grades were not apparent to the French Jews. Rist's testimony gives the impression that the French gentiles were equally unaware. He believed that the laws were beyond the realms of comprehension.¹²⁹ The need to blame someone for the ills that had befallen France had seen outsiders targeted as scapegoats. Jews were perceived as outsiders, which may have encouraged the idea that all Jews were foreigners. Rist was particularly appalled by the overt glee shown by the newspapers in the Occupied Zone: "*Depuis hier les décrets sur les Juifs sont publics! Un ignoble journal, le Pilon, met en grand titre rouge: La chasse est ouverte.*» *Depuis l'époque de la Saint-Barthélemy, rien d'aussi affreux comme bassesse.*"¹³⁰ In this respect, Rist may have believed that the Jewish issue was a long-standing one but Vichy had chosen a means of dealing with it that was unprecedented in its ignominy.

It is worth examining what these diarists felt were the motives behind Vichy's anti-Semitic policies. Were they an attempt to rewrite the alleged wrongs that had occurred during the Popular Front years? Were they a gesture of goodwill to the Germans? Or were they encouraged by the Germans? Other than the *forces du mal* argument Vichy propagated, there was no other explicit propaganda targeting the Jews in the Unoccupied

¹²⁶ Werth, *Déposition*, p.51. (3.10.40)

¹²⁷ Paxton, *Old guard and new order*, pp.174-175. Vichy, unlike the Germans, displayed no more intolerance of blacks than the Third Republic had. Jewish war veterans were exempted from anti-Semitic laws and long-established families were saved from some of the rigours of the law.

¹²⁸ Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*, p.141. See also pp.161-162.

¹²⁹ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.100. (26.10.40)

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.96. (6.10.40) See also p.95. (4.10.40)

Zone. Vichy commissioned no anti-Semitic posters, there was no anti-Semitism in any of the official film documentaries produced by the regime, and no speech by Pétain directly mentioned the Jews. This was in stark contrast with the Occupied Zone where the Germans and collaborationist press were vehemently anti-Semitic.¹³¹ Yet it is clear that Vichy was influenced by the Germans in terms of enacting anti-Semitic laws. Pastor Boegner, who was one of the rare diarists to be offered an insight into the minds of Vichy authorities, met with Lucien Romier, who was economic adviser to Pétain:

*Nous avons parlé de la question juive. Le Maréchal en est de plus en plus ému. Ce matin même, au Conseil des ministres, Darlan a déclaré qu'il faut changer complètement de méthode. Mais la pression allemande est très forte.*¹³²

It is interesting to note that Rist firmly believed that Vichy's anti-Semitic laws were designed to curry favour with Germany. That Vichy should openly divide the country was an indication that it cared more about the opinion of Germany than it did about its own people:

*Décret sur les Juifs paru hier. Ignominie. Visiblement, le gouvernement s'enferme dans une politique qu'il croit plaisante aux Allemands, et qui de plus doit, dans sa pensée, lui amener l'adhésion des Français les plus violents. L'illusion que l'ennemi lui en saura gré est si folle qu'on ne peut la mesurer. Le voilà prisonnier d'une politique dont l'effet le plus clair est de diviser les Français à l'heure où l'union serait le premier devoir.*¹³³

In short, Rist saw an ulterior motive for Vichy's actions. Guéhenno was slightly more circumspect but nevertheless believed that Vichy was consciously following the example of Germany:

*Le vainqueur nous inocule ses maladies. Le gouvernement de Vichy publie ce matin le statut des juifs en France. Nous voilà antisémites, racistes. Mais de quelle race? Malin qui pourrait le dire. Je pense à mes bons amis juifs, M..., L..., si généreux et si intelligents. Mais on se venge justement de leur intelligence. Je me sens plein de honte.*¹³⁴

Both suggest that there were at least some French who believed that Vichy was more interested in appeasing German opinion than it was in keeping the nation together. The fact that the overwhelming majority of the diarists, however, remained silent on the Jewish statutes would suggest that the French population was largely indifferent to the

¹³¹ Jackson, *The dark years*, p.359.

¹³² Boegner, *Carnets du Pasteur Bagueur*, p.158. (17.1.42)

¹³³ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.99. (20.10.40)

¹³⁴ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.57. (19.10.40)

discriminatory legislation enacted by Vichy. This does not necessarily mean that they agreed with it but it suggests that they had more pressing concerns.

There appears to be a lack of empathy in the wider French public to the ramifications of this discriminatory legislation. The application of the Jewish statutes drew many people into complicity with anti-Semitism. It was the professional organisations of doctors, dentists and lawyers who administered the quotas in their professions and it was the universities that excluded Jewish teachers. The fact that the statutes relied upon the cooperation of people who were not necessarily virulent anti-Semites makes their participation all the more significant.¹³⁵ In other words, self-interest may have well been a major reason for the tacit consent to the discriminatory measures imposed by Vichy and the Germans. The removal of Jews from many professions and businesses allowed many gentiles a free lift up the ladder. Freemasons, communists and Jews were liable to lose their jobs and, in the case of the Jews, their businesses. Yet influence counted for more than the rule of the law. Thus Freemasons, who should have lost their jobs, managed to stay on by virtue of their connections, whereas Jews, who might have retained their employment even under the laws that Vichy made for itself, were sacked. There is also evidence that gentiles were quick to dump Jewish partners in order to take over their businesses.¹³⁶ This raises the important consideration that the Jews were not the only group to be persecuted during the Occupation. Vichy also openly discriminated, for example, against the Freemasons and the Communists. Yet their persecution is also conspicuously absent from the diaries. It is true that the Freemasons belonged to a secret society and were not as visible in the French community as the Jews, particularly after the imposition of the yellow star in the Occupied Zone. The diarists did express horror at the shooting of hostages in 1941, whose numbers were almost exclusively taken from communist prisoners. Yet they were perceived as French victims rather than dissidents who were paying for their communist crimes. Even Duméril, who was actively involved with defending Communists put on trial, tended to look upon them, above all, as French citizens. Communists were not part of the Final Solution but they could suffer a similar fate in German or even French camps. Yet, in its

¹³⁵ Jackson, *The dark years*, pp.370-371.

¹³⁶ Gildea, *Marianne in chains*, p.242.

preoccupation with the fate of the Jews, the historiography takes little account of this fact.

The answer to why the majority of the diarists ignored the persecution of all these groups may well lie in the fact that the wider French public was prevented from seeing the ramifications of these discriminatory laws. All Jews, for example, in the *zone libre* had to declare their Jewish status at the prefecture, which had been a requirement in the Occupied Zone since September 27, 1940. It was humiliation, rather than anger, that Werth felt most of all:

*Je vais à Lons pour y déclarer qu'aux termes de la loi du 2 juin 1941, je suis juif. Je me sens humilié, c'est la première fois que la société m'humilie. Je me sens humilié non pas d'être juif, mais d'être présumé, étant juif, d'une qualité inférieure. C'est absurde, c'est peut-être un défaut d'orgueil, mais c'est ainsi.*¹³⁷

He felt obliged to create a *patrie juive*, to which he felt he did not belong but felt, nevertheless, compelled to create out of simple dignity. When he went to the prefecture to declare his Jewish status he bellowed it out, as if singing *La Marseillaise*:

*Ainsi ils prétendent m'imposer une autre partie, un autre groupe. Quelle lâcheté serait de délibérer sur le point de savoir si je me sens ou je ne me sens pas juif! Si vous insultez en moi le nom de juif, je suis juif, éperdument juif, juif jusqu'à la racine des cheveux, juif jusqu'aux tripes. Après on verra.*¹³⁸

How could the wider French public share in this humiliation when they were not directly involved? This discrimination occurred behind the scenes. The French may have been aware of this discrimination but they did not have to witness it. The second year of the Occupation, however, would see more diarists, particularly in the Occupied Zone, share in this humiliation felt by the Jews living in France.

It is interesting to trace the evolution of thinking before this overt empathy occurred. The Germans had cared so little for French internal matters during the first year that France was used as a dumping ground for German Jews. On 23-24 October 1940, over intense French government objections, six thousand German Jews were sent into France from Western Germany. Just as France was not included in the 'Middle Eastern Great Economic Region' of German peace plans, so too was it not considered part of the area to be 'purified' of Jews.¹³⁹ There appeared to be a perception that the Jews being

¹³⁷ Werth, *Déposition*, p.225. (9.7.41)

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.225-226. (9.7.41)

¹³⁹ Paxton, *Old guard and new order*, p.147.

targeted by the Germans and Vichy were foreign Jews. This may well explain why the removal of foreign Jews was largely accepted by the French, who were having great difficulty surviving themselves. The attitude of the Germans, however, would change in the second year, particularly after 1942. Yet until then, the fear of communism and the hysteria built up over *les forces du mal* had blinded the French to the direction events were taking:

Avis annonçant, à la suite d'attentats, une amende d'un milliard sur les juifs; la déportation de nombreux juifs au travail forcé dans l'Est; la fusillade de 100 otages mais, disent certains journaux, n'appartenant pas au peuple de France (juifs, communistes, anarchistes). J'ai entendu une dame dire: «... mais, voyons, ce ne sont que des communistes!» Paroles effroyables! Georges Suarez dans Aujourd'hui écrit: «Si sévère que soit la nouvelle, elle a été accueillie avec soulagement par l'opinion parce qu'elle fait la part de l'innocence.»¹⁴⁰

Inherent in such an attitude was that the Jews were second-class citizens, even though France was the birthplace of the Declaration of Human Rights. Whilst there may have been initially relief that the Germans were only targeting the Jews and Communists, the longer these arrests and executions continued, the more the French became concerned for their own safety:

L'air est de plus en plus lourd, irrespirable. Dans certains quartiers la police barre les rues. Tout un arrondissement est perquisitionné (le XIe). Des juifs sont arrêtés, des communistes fusillés. Tous les matins, de nouvelles affiches invitent à la délation, on nous menace de mort. L'«occupant» inquiet organise la terreur.¹⁴¹

The French were gradually being caught up in the deaths of their fellow French citizens. The limited comfort brought by the sense that only the Jews or communists were being targeted by Vichy and the Germans was undermined by the fact that anyone suspected of opposition, let alone resistance, was liable to arrest and deportation. It is interesting to note that Guéhenno believed that the Germans alone were responsible for creating this climate of terror: “*Telle est la méthode de répression des Allemands qu'il n'est pas un Français qui bientôt ne sentira sa dette envers les Juifs et les communistes, emprisonnés, fusillés pour nous, véritables hosties du peuple.*”¹⁴² Those who were living in the Unoccupied Zone had yet to experience or witness the repression of the Germans first-

¹⁴⁰ Galtier-Boissière, *Journal*, p.84. (15.12.41)

¹⁴¹ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.178. (21.8.41)

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p.197. (12.10.41)

hand. It was inevitable that those living in the Occupied Zone had a more sympathetic attitude towards the Jews, as they were confronted, for example, with the sight of children being separated from their parents. This was not something they read in the newspapers but, rather, something which they saw with their own eyes. They may well not have wanted to see it but they often had no choice in the matter.

It appears, therefore, that the major reason for this difference in attitude between the two main zones was that the imposition of the yellow star was only compulsory in the Occupied Zone. Vichy refused to follow the German example of forcing all Jews in the Occupied Zone to wear a yellow star but this was more out of fear of public reaction than concern for the Jews. Somehow Werth managed to obtain a document written by Darlan, which is most revealing of Vichy's attitude towards the Jews. Darlan stated in this document that he was opposed to the law requiring Jews to wear a yellow star:

J'estime que les diverses mesures de rigueur prises jusqu'à ce jour à l'encontre des Israélites sont suffisantes pour atteindre le but recherché, c'est-à-dire les écarter des emplois publics et des postes de commande de l'activité industrielle et commerciale du pays. Il ne saurait être question d'aller au-delà sans choquer profondément l'opinion publique française qui ne verrait dans ces mesures que des vexations sans efficacité réelle tant pour l'avenir du pays que pour la sécurité des troupes d'occupation. L'excès même de ces décisions irait certainement à l'encontre du but recherché et risquerait de provoquer un mouvement en faveur des Israélites, considérés comme des martyrs.¹⁴³

This clearly suggests that Vichy wanted to repress the Jews but in a manner that would not offend the French people. That in turn suggests that Vichy was aware that whilst there was a sufficiently large anti-Semitic sentiment for some discriminatory measures to be enforced, there was equally a limit as to how far these measures could be pushed. Bobkowski had already observed sympathy for the Jews at the end of 1941 when the Germans decided to execute one hundred Jews and Communists and fine the Jews in the Occupied Zone a billion francs:

Les Allemands essayent d'expliquer que cela ne concerne pas les Français, pour atténuer le coup. N'empêche que les Français sont indignés. Même Radio-Vichy a laissé entendre qu'elle n'approuvait pas ce genre de méthodes parce que la mort de ces cent personnes vise malgré tout des Français. Ce désaccord discret de Vichy est d'un certain point de vue très révélateur parce que c'est la première fois qu'on entend ce genre de commentaires, d'autant qu'il s'agit de juifs. Beaucoup parmi les personnes avec qui j'ai parlé aujourd'hui m'ont dit:

¹⁴³ Werth, *Déposition*, p.305. (12.6.42)

«Il a fallu qu'il s'agisse de juifs pour que Vichy proteste. Ne trouvez-vous pas cela un tout petit peu... étrange?» On pourrait se lancer dans maintes suppositions, et ce très antisémites. On entend ce genre de discours dans la bouche de gens à qui cette idée ne serait jamais venue et, sur ce plan, la «protestation» de Vichy a fait plus de mal que de bien.¹⁴⁴

There were still those at this stage, who saw the Jews as second-class citizens. The first grumbles had occurred but there was still new impetus needed.

The yellow star provided that impetus, as it was one thing to discriminate against the Jews in restricting their movements and work but this had been discrimination that the wider French public did not have to visibly witness. The following observation of Guéhenno not only expresses sympathy for the Jews in the Occupied Zone for having to wear the yellow star but also sympathy for the fact that many Jews of poor means were unfairly hit the hardest, which undermined the stereotype of the rich Jew:

Depuis huit jours les Juifs doivent porter l'étoile jaune et appeler sur eux le mépris public. Jamais les gens n'ont été avec eux si aimables. C'est qu'il n'est sans doute rien de plus ignoble que de contraindre un homme à avoir à tous les instants honte de lui-même et le gentil peuple de Paris le sait. Comme le savait Nietzsche. «Epargnez, disait-il, à tout homme la honte.» Rien qu'en voyant les Juifs de ce quartier, on peut vérifier à quel point ils sont «le capitalisme international»: la plupart sont dans une évidente misère et le petit peuple tout entier s'indigne qu'on s'applique à déshonorer ainsi la pauvreté.¹⁴⁵

The Jewish journalist, Jacques Biélinky, observed in Paris that when Jewish-owned shops were required to put up a special sign, many of them reported an increase in non-Jewish clients as a sign of solidarity. Some even went so far as to wear stars in sympathy and were punished by being sent to Drancy.¹⁴⁶

The out-of-sight out-of-mind mentality was totally undermined by the wearing of the yellow star. The wider French public, which was by no means completely against the Jews, was forced to acknowledge the persecution of the Jews. This was visible and 'official humiliation' in the words of Werth.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, the French were forced to decide on how to react to the Jews: to ignore or support them. As Werth argued, such feelings of sympathy required reflection beyond the individual level. An old Parisian

¹⁴⁴ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, pp.243-244. (15.12.41)

¹⁴⁵ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.266. (16.6.42)

¹⁴⁶ Jackson, *The dark years*, p.375. See Thérive, *L'envers du décor*, p.129. (1.6.42) Women wore yellow handkerchiefs as a sign of unity with the Jews, who had to wear yellow stars.

¹⁴⁷ Werth, *Déposition*, pp.302-303. (10.6.42)

shopkeeper taking refuge in the Unoccupied Zone admitted to Werth that if she was a Jew she would hate Hitler too:

*Elle ne peut pas penser plus d'un individu à la fois. Ce qui ne lui permet aucune notion du juste ou de l'injuste ou de l'ignoble. Cela explique sa réaction vague à l'anti-sémitisme. Les chrétiens qui, à Paris, portèrent, quelques heures, par protestation et défi, l'insigne jaune, se sentaient humiliés par cette obligation imposée aux Juifs, autant et plus que s'ils avaient été juifs. Ils se sauvaient ainsi d'une humiliation personnelle. Mais la pauvre vieille n'imagine pas si loin, ne possède pas ce pouvoir de transfert et de substitution, sans lequel il n'y a point de sens de la justice, de sens de l'humain.*¹⁴⁸

It was admittedly harder to feel sympathy for a faceless victim rather than for someone you were visibly confronted with in the street. Darlan's concerns were justified as there would even be some public protests in the Free Zone, which led Laval to remark, in September 1942, that as France had decided to deliver to Germany all foreign Jews and Jews naturalised after 1933, there was no need for the Germans to make further demands. This was an indication that opinion had hardened.¹⁴⁹ What was behind this hardening of opinion in both main zones?

The diarists observed that the round-ups, or *rafles*, did even more to stir up feelings amongst the wider French public than the imposition of the yellow star. This was 'official humiliation' taken to a new and more frightening level. Initially, mainly foreign Jews would be targeted in these round-ups. Nevertheless, as Guéhenno observed, this was the first time the French public visibly witnessed the ramifications of Jewish persecution on such a grand scale. This was a marked jump from the wearing of the yellow star:

*Hier, au nom de la loi française, cinq milles Juifs ont été conduits dans des camps de concentration. Pauvres Juifs venus de Pologne, d'Autriche, de Tchécoslovaquie, gens misérables de petits métiers qui mettaient en grand péril l'Etat. Cela s'appelle «épurer». Rue Compans plusieurs hommes ont été emmenés. Leurs femmes, leurs enfants suppliaient les policiers, criaient, pleuraient... Le petit peuple parisien qui assistait à ces scènes déchirantes était plein de révolte et de honte.*¹⁵⁰

The fundamental point that must be taken out of the round-ups of the summer of 1942 is that French Jews were being targeted by the Germans and that the French police were

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.321-322. (15.7.42)

¹⁴⁹ Burin, *La France à l'heure allemande*, p.163.

¹⁵⁰ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.139. (9.5.41) See also Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.215. (20.12.41)

involved in rounding them up. There may well have been many who considered the Jews to be inferior but this did not take away the fact that Jews of French nationality were being deported as well. There were many round-ups in Occupied France but one in particular many diarists recorded was the one in Paris on July 16, 1942, where some 13 000 Jews were herded into the Vélodrome d'Hiver and then shipped off to Drancy and eventually to the East. Werth was angered that it took so long for the news of this shameful incident to reach the Unoccupied Zone:

Le Vel' d'Hiv', les enfants parqués, arrachés aux parents. «Pour les parents, me dit Laurent, qui panse ses vaches, pour les parents, il y a de quoi mourir... Moi, il me semble que je pourrais mourir... moi ou un autre.» Suzanne s'étonne de mon impassibilité. C'est qu'en effet il y a de quoi mourir. Et je m'efforce de dissimuler mon sentiment de pitié, de fureur et de honte. Tout cela est mêlé et je me sens coupable, comme si j'étais moi-même un des bourreaux. Sans doute, il me reste l'orgueil d'évaluer à l'infini la profondeur de l'abîme entre un homme de la Gestapo et moi-même. Mais cette profondeur ne peut être plus grande que la plus grande différence entre deux hommes. Cela fait peur. J'ai honte aussi pour ces journalistes de la presse allemande de Paris, qui acceptent les cris, les pleurs de ces enfants parqués.¹⁵¹

The delay suggests that Vichy was sensitive to the fact that such news could undermine the legislation already put in place in the Unoccupied Zone.

The diarists detected a level of sympathy previously absent from the wider French population, at least in terms of those who were publicly expressing their feelings towards the Jews. Yet at the same time one can also distinguish a sense of fear that the French population as a whole was going to be caught under the net of German persecution:

La fin de la semaine dernière a été marqué par des rafles de Juifs s'étendant à des milliers de personnes. Les femmes sont parquées au Vélodrome d'hiver. Les enfants de six à quatorze ans sont enlevés à leurs mères et groupés sous la surveillance de gendarmes. Les hommes doivent être envoyés sur le front oriental. On dit que seuls les Juifs apatrides sont arrêtés. En fait, il semble que des Français aient été pris aussi dans le filet. Tout le monde est sous le coup de la terreur et de l'horreur créées par ces mesures.¹⁵²

Suddenly the thought occurred to many that if the Germans could make the jump from foreign Jews to French Jews, they could also make the jump from French Jews to other French nationals. There may have been sympathy for the manner in which the French

¹⁵¹ Werth, *Déposition*, pp.338-339. (17.8.42)

¹⁵² Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.262. (24.7.42)

Jews were deported but it appears that the major concern was that every French citizen might be caught up in these deportations:

*Très vive émotion parmi les Français. Ils commentent en particulier avec fureur le fait que les enfants de plus de trois ans aient été séparés de leur mère. Je ne peux que le noter. Je n'ai pas le courage de faire de commentaires. En moi tout hurle et tout se déchire. Dans le même temps, le bruit a couru, très probablement répandu par les milieux juifs, que ça allait être notre tour, et tout le monde y a cru. Paris était en pleine effervescence. Les plus peureux sont partis à la campagne, d'autres n'ont pas couché chez eux plusieurs nuits de suite. Maintenant, tout le monde est persuadé que tôt ou tard, ils vont nous emmener, nous aussi.*¹⁵³

It appears that the French still thought of their own personal safety above all else. This is understandable in a time of great fear where the Germans were becoming noticeably more repressive. Yet it also explains why this increase in sympathy for the plight of Jews in France did not translate into more effective support and why anti-Semitic sentiment was allowed to continue. Indeed, comment by the diarists on the Jews would reach its apogee with the *rafles* of the summer of 1942 and would noticeably decline thereafter. It is interesting, for example, to note the difference between the deportation of the Jews and the *relève* system to recruit workers. The Jews were relatively few, dispersed among the local populations and isolated from the rest of society as refugees or bearers of the yellow star. On the other hand, the workers were concentrated in large-scale workforces, firmly implanted in working class communities and were able to show defiance and solidarity. The Jews elicited nothing more than sympathy when they were rounded up. There were individuals who were prepared to show solidarity with the Jews but this did not change their fate. Furthermore, whereas the French authorities acted promptly and efficiently to execute German orders when it came to rounding up Jews, this was far less the case when it came to rounding up workers.¹⁵⁴

This leads to the equally sinister consideration of Vichy's involvement in these round-ups. They were carried out by the French police under the direct supervision of the SS but the Germans had never forcibly demanded the participation of the French police. This is significant, as without the participation of the French police, the SS would have been unable to make anywhere near as many arrests. Vichy had a simple choice: to let

¹⁵³ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.344. (4.8.42) See also Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.262. (24.7.42) and Daladier, *Journal de captivité*, pp.156-157. (3.8.42)

¹⁵⁴ Gildea, *Marianne in chains*, p.287.

the Germans proceed in the Occupied Zone and compromise its sovereignty or do the dirty work for them. Often the latter was chosen. The round-ups showed that Vichy was not only in collusion with Germany but openly working for Germany. There was the realisation what the policy of collaboration actually meant, which sped up the process of a junction of hostility between not only the French and Germans but also the French and Vichy:

Et quand le gouvernement de M. Pétain souscrit aux lois raciales, livre à la Gestapo les étrangers qui avaient cru en la parole de la France, quand le bourreau nazi trouve dans la police de Vichy, parmi les hommes de Doriot, de Darnand, assez d'aides et de valets pour n'avoir presque plus besoin de se salir les mains lui-même, qui pourrait feindre de ne pas voir que c'est d'une trahison, ou plus précisément d'une apostasie que ces misérables chargent la conscience de cette personne, de cette âme vivante: la nation française?¹⁵⁵

It would be premature to say that it was a brutal change in opinion and a definite move away from the Vichy regime. The daily struggle for survival encouraged a *sauve-qui-peut* mentality. There were no great numbers at a popular level, let alone at an official level, who seemed willing to try to stop the deportation of Jews. This may well have been because it seemed impossible to bend German will or to openly defy them. Yet this did not change the fact that it appeared that Vichy had irrevocably chosen the path of Nazi Germany. The French police's involvement in the round-ups made a mockery of the concept of the *double jeu*. The French were forced to consider whether they could still remain passive when confronted with such persecution and open collusion with Germany:

Mais alors, face aux tragédies d'Outre-Rhin, pouvais-je encore opter pour la passivité? Les nazis avaient organisé la terreur en Bohême, en Autriche. La presse nous révéla l'existence du camp de Dachau où étaient internés des milliers de Juifs et d'antifascistes. [...] Partout dans le Reich, l'attentat avait servi de prétexte à d'horribles pogromes: les dernières synagogues avaient été brûlées, les magasins juifs saccagés, des milliers d'Israélites internés. «Peut-on travailler, peut-on s'amuser, peut-on vivre quand les choses pareilles se passent?» me disait Bianca en pleurant. Et j'avais honte de mon égoïsme, moi qui obstinais à miser sur le bonheur.¹⁵⁶

De Beauvoir was speaking about the period before the war and the fact that one could not turn a blind eye to the horrors of the Nazi regime. But the same problem applied to the

¹⁵⁵ Mauriac, *Œuvres complètes*, p.372.

¹⁵⁶ De Beauvoir, *La force de l'âge*, p.365.

second year of the Occupation. The French could not turn a blind eye to the German persecution of the Jews and Vichy's complicit role in it but at the same time one had to try to continue with one's life. Open defiance of the Germans or Vichy would only lead to more suffering. The Jewish issue, therefore, would remain unresolved. There was a definite change in attitude amongst the French towards the Jews but there was still an unwillingness to do anything about it.

The weight of time versus *la marche progressive*.

The diaries reveal that the first year of the Occupation was largely characterised by indifference. The diarists had to come to terms with the defeat but at the same time they had to try to get their lives back on course after the immense upheaval of the German invasion. This was admittedly an uneven process in that the Occupation affected certain regions more severely than others. This indifference, however, should not be construed as acquiescence, as some historians have interpreted the overwhelming silence of the French population. Pétain and, in particular, Vichy enjoyed far from unanimous support. The diarists observed that the French tended to adapt to the Occupation on an individual basis rather than as a local community or nation: "*Les Français se sont déjà habitués, chacun s'est accommodé comme il peut de la situation et s'est organisé sa petite vie [...]*"¹⁵⁷ Bobkowski was referring to the French response to the news that Pétain and Laval would continue at Vichy as before, even after the Germans had occupied all of metropolitan France in November 1942. The temptation is to think that one can detect a continuity of opinion and behaviour throughout this period. This *accommodation*, however, did not mean making one decision and settling on that one path. Reaction to events and personal experience saw opinion constantly vacillate. Historians, such as Laborie¹⁵⁸, maintain that 1941 saw a subtle but definite change in France's collective thinking but it is not only valuable to explore the reasons behind this developing general

¹⁵⁷ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.324. (14.4.42)

¹⁵⁸ Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy*, p.248. He argues that the importance of 1941 has been overshadowed by the significant events of 1942 and the false perception that 1940-1941 was a homogeneous period. He claims that it constituted the first vital steps in the irreversible abandoning of the regime, although he is quick to point out that this was not a linear, uniform disengagement.

trend in French opinion but also the reasons behind the continued individual variation and oscillation in opinion.

The summer of 1940 showed no hint of the prospect of a long war yet there would be growing signs in the summer of 1941 that the war would be much longer than first anticipated. The invincibility of the Wehrmacht, which had swept through Western Europe essentially unchallenged, would finally be undermined by effective resistance in Russia. Whilst a long war seemed increasingly likely with the passing of time, the uncertainty of the final outcome very much persisted. Guéhenno remarked at the start of the winter of 1941-1942 that the French had to contend not only with the cold and hunger but also with the thought that they had no idea how long their suffering would continue:

*C'est l'une de nos misères de vivre ainsi sans rien savoir, rien sur quoi nous puissions prendre appui, construire le moindre raisonnement, la moindre espérance, dans une sorte de nuage mental fait de vagues bruits, de fausses nouvelles, de mensonges intéressés, d'illusions imbéciles.*¹⁵⁹

The future remained impenetrable, and although Germany's veil of invincibility had been lifted, there was certainly no great optimism that Germany would lose the war: "*Tout le monde reconnaît que les Allemands n'ont pas vaincu et ne peuvent plus vaincre. Mais les Anglais non plus. Et comment le pourraient-ils.*"¹⁶⁰ In order to make an unequivocal choice, one has to be certain that one is making the right choice. The uncertain climate surrounding occupied France discouraged such choices. There were, of course, exceptions to the rule. Drieu, for example, was convinced before the defeat of the restorative powers of fascism, which enabled him to firmly side with the Germans from the outset of the Occupation. Equally, Guéhenno was resolute from the outset in his opposition to the German military presence in France. The overwhelming majority of the diarists, however, were much more circumspect in their decision-making.

The prolongation of the war appeared to be the only certainty, which encouraged an *attentiste* mentality. In the summer of 1940, there had been little or no thought to the future. Vichy was seen as a regime of circumstance, and the diarists felt disconnected from the events of the war. Werth, for example, felt as if he was just killing time in Saint-Amour. He lived alone in his country-house and often spent the day reading, writing his diary or taking walks in the countryside. He did observe rural life in Saint-Amour for his

¹⁵⁹ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.216. (28.11.41)

¹⁶⁰ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.187. (14.9.41)

Déposition but he always felt on the periphery. He was always conscious that he was not only disconnected from the events of the war but also from the everyday life of the Jura village. His prolonged stay in Saint-Amour was out of necessity rather than of his own choosing. The outcome of the war, therefore, held that much more significance for Werth. The more time he spent in Saint-Amour away from his family and familiar Paris surroundings, the more powerless and frustrated he felt:

*Le temps, depuis l'armistice, ce n'était pas du vrai temps. C'était du temps d'attente. Nous le classions dans la catégorie du temps qu'on passe dans une gare pour attendre un train, dans la catégorie des nuits de chemin de fer. Temps qu'on annule, temps hors la vie, temps intermédiaire. Mais ce temps a duré, dure encore. Si j'avais su, je ne serais pas resté ici. Je ne serais pas resté immobile, inutile. Je serais allé n'importe où, où l'on a prise, si infinitésimale soit-elle, sur l'événement, où du moins on garde le droit de le juger, de ne pas le subir, comme une bête. Je ne serais pas resté dans cette étable qu'est la campagne. Mais où?... En Angleterre, en Amérique? Où et comment? Maintenant, il est trop tard. Je suis rivé à l'état contemplatif.*¹⁶¹

Werth had all the time in the world to contemplate the war and his place in it. Indeed, at times it seems that his situation afforded him too much time to contemplate about the war. Other diarists had more of a semblance of normality in their lives, which would distract them from the war. Some, such as Rist and Roussin, continued their previous occupations and others, such as Duméril and Bobkowski, took up new occupations. Furthermore, these diarists would be influenced more, at least initially, by other distractions thrown up by the Occupation. The needs of the individual – working, finding food, returning home, finding separated family members – outweighed any thoughts on the war or the future of France as a nation. Although Cocteau is an extreme example, it is significant to note how one's work could distract one's mind: "*Depuis que je travaille à Joinville, je n'ai pas pu écrire une ligne. C'est à se demander comment le milieu du cinéma trouve une minute pour lire, pour vivre, pour aller chez le coiffeur.*"¹⁶²

With the passing of time, however, the war's impact on France took on a more significant dimension. Indifference to the war was replaced by a sense of being inundated by the war: "*Il faudrait trouver les moyens de durer à travers cette horreur, de s'installer*

¹⁶¹ Werth, *Déposition*, pp.245-246. (6.10.41) See also p.339: *Après la débâcle, je me suis trompé dans mon évaluation du temps. J'ai cru à un temps mort, à un temps entre parenthèses, à une contraction ou à un sommeil du temps.* (18.8.42)

¹⁶² Cocteau, *Journal*, p.211. (November-December 1942)

en elle, d'attendre. Mais comment faire? On a du sang jusqu'au ventre et tout autour de soi? Comment ne pas le voir?"¹⁶³ It took time for every diarist to realise that regardless of one's geographical situation in France, nobody could escape the war. This realisation was compounded by the fact that there seemed to be no end to the war. Guéhenno believed that this overwhelming feeling of helplessness made the French vulnerable to the sinister designs of Vichy and Nazi Germany:

*L'opinion, il y a un an, molle et lâche, était prête à tout. Vichy et Berlin ont si bien fait ensemble que le pays tout entier a désormais le sentiment de sa servitude. Il se sent asservi, non gouverné. Il déborde de haine et il ne sait pas encore ce qu'il veut, il sait du moins très bien ce qu'il ne veut pas: c'est justement tout ce qu'il subit. J'entends dire à de notables bourgeois que «la République n'était pas si mal». Pourquoi donc l'avoir trahie, livrée? Mais nous n'avons pas encore touché au fond de l'horreur. La vengeance appellera longtemps la vengeance. Quel homme ou quel événement pourrait rendre à ce pays le sens de sa dignité propre? Il vit dans de telles conditions qu'il ne pourra de longtemps agir qu'en réaction à des événements extérieurs; la défaite de l'Allemagne?*¹⁶⁴

The majority of the diarists would have disagreed with Guéhenno's notion that the entire country felt enslaved by Vichy or Germany. Certainly diarists such as Cocteau and Roussin did not feel inhibited by the German military presence or the authoritarian Vichy regime. Guéhenno's attitude right from the outset was that he was a prisoner, which would have inevitably coloured his view.¹⁶⁵ Bobkowski did argue that the French were ripe for subversion in the initial stages of the Occupation:

*C'est en 1940, alors que les trois quarts de la France étaient psychologiquement favorables aux Allemands, que les Allemands suscitaient beaucoup de sympathie et qu'ils leur en imposaient, qu'il fallait rassasier les Français avec du pain, du beurre, des œufs, de la viande et du vin.*¹⁶⁶

He felt that the Germans had failed to realise that the French would not tolerate any further deterioration of conditions. The armistice was supposed to alleviate the suffering of the French rather than increase it. Werth, to a certain extent, corroborates the first half of Guéhenno's argument. He certainly believed that France was divided into incompatible *tronçons* and that all these factions were bitterly fighting for their particular interests at the expense of the nation. Yet at the same time, he believed that the

¹⁶³ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.225. (16.12.41)

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.222 (12.12.41)

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.9.

¹⁶⁶ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, pp.348-349. (5.9.42)

overwhelming majority of the French were against collaboration: “*La politique de Vichy, c’est l’intégration de la France à l’Allemagne. Le pays la repousse mollement, la réprouve. Mais c’est un mouvement intime, une réprobation intérieure.*”¹⁶⁷ Where he agreed with Guéhenno was his belief that the French were too accepting of the repercussions of defeat:

*La France – ce que d’ici je puis voir et présumer de la France – se laisse museler par Vichy, comme un chien docile. Elle ne peut échapper, il faut qu’elle consente à la muselière. Mais du moins pourrait-elle grogner?*¹⁶⁸

The French endured the Germans and Vichy, as opposed to being enslaved to them. It was just that Werth often felt that the French endured too much. It is interesting to note that the diarists’ views were influenced by the particular zone in which they were living. Werth was inclined to emphasise the influence of Vichy on the people of Saint-Amour. Rist, who lived in the Occupied Zone, was more inclined to emphasise the German presence:

*Il est curieux de constater la physionomie de Paris. On passe à côté des Allemands sans les voir. Ceux-ci sont entourés de silence. L’hostilité cachée de chaque Français se respire. Silence dans les trains, dans le métro, dans la rue. Chacun garde ses pensées. Et pourtant on sent l’inimitié. Tout le monde attend quelque chose. [...] Les gestes du gouvernement de Vichy ont quelque chose d’irréel. La vérité est ailleurs. Ces fantoches n’ont aucune prise sur l’opinion et les sentiments. On regarde l’avenir – c’est là qu’est la réalité. L’impression que nous vivons dans une parenthèse (horrible sans doute, mais simple parenthèse). On vous dit: oui, les Anglais, c’est très bien, mais pourront-ils réellement vaincre? C’est la seule inquiétude. Tout le monde aussi se sent humilié que nous soyons purement passifs dans ce drame.*¹⁶⁹

The diarists would all agree with Guéhenno’s contention that the French had lost all initiative in their actions and thoughts. The previous passage from Rist illustrates that Werth was not the only one to feel helpless. The thought that France had been taken out of the fighting led to the belief that every French citizen had been taken out of the war:

*L’univers entier se bat pour lui ou contre lui. Mais il ne participe pas à cette bataille. L’histoire se fait pour lui comme pour les autres, mais elle se fait sans lui. L’événement vient au Français, mais il ne va pas à l’événement. Il lui reste un pouvoir, un droit : celui de faire des vœux.*¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Werth, *Déposition*, p.128. (9.12.40)

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.209. (21.5.41)

¹⁶⁹ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.107. (23.11.40)

¹⁷⁰ Werth, *Déposition*, p.51. (3.10.40) See also Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.260. (27.5.42) and Moret, *Journal d’une mauvaise Française*, p.116. (10.11.41)

It was as if Vichy and Germany had put a spell on them, and though there was the growing realisation that France was in a worse position than under the Republic, one could only wait and endure or *subir*. That is not to say that the diarists were happy with Vichy or the German military presence in France. The problem was that they could not shake themselves out of their passivity. This was aided by the fact that there seemed to be no viable alternative to Vichy¹⁷¹ and the fact that a German defeat still seemed uncertain. The diarists had no concept of the suffering and perils that awaited them in 1940 but with the passing of time came the slow but steady exposure to the horrors of war and France's inescapable role in it. This disenchantment with Vichy and the German occupation, which had already begun during the first year, was an ongoing process. What was clear was that there were growing numbers who were unhappy with France's situation but at the same time there was a general resignation that nothing could be done to alter that situation:

*Les nouvelles de Russie sont mauvaises. Il semble aux ouvriers que leur rêve s'écroule. Les visages se ferment. Approche le moment où, personne ne tenant plus à rien, s'allumera la flamme des révolutions. On se sent lentement glisser vers on ne sait quoi d'affreux. On étouffe. Au fond de mon cœur, je souhaite aux pauvres gens au milieu desquels je vis courage et patience. Nous ne pouvons rien et nous ne pourrions rien longtemps encore.*¹⁷²

The weight of time is, therefore, crucial for explaining the ostensibly rigid, passive behaviour of the diarists. Their actions were governed not only by what had happened but also by what they thought was going to happen. The uncertainty over what the future had in store for them prevented them from making any irrevocable decisions. Historians talk of a perceptible change in thinking during the second year of the Occupation but this tends to shift the emphasis away from the fact that the French continued to remain overwhelmingly outside the axes of collaboration and resistance. The events of the war were watched more closely by the diarists but they became far more impatient for the war to end:

Période stationnaire, où nous vivons tous dans l'attente. Les Anglais ont repris leurs bombardements des usines de la région parisienne, – et nous avons eu des

¹⁷¹ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.214. (14.12.41)

¹⁷² Werth, *Déposition*, p.178. (21.8.41)

*alertes ces trois dernières nuits. La radio parle beaucoup de l'esprit d'offensive des Anglais et des Américains. Mais quand se traduira-t-il par des résultats?*¹⁷³

The fact that the war seemed more and more likely to last a long time merely served to compound that impatience. It was the accumulation of events rather than the events themselves that would wear the French down. This was a process that was only allowed to occur with the passage of time.

Herein lies the crux of the entire Occupation: Vichy was born out of the circumstances of the defeat but it was never meant to be a permanent situation. A change in thinking may have taken place during the second year but it did not change the fact that the French had no idea how the Occupation would be brought to an end. It is important to place oneself in the position of the people living in the Occupation at the time, and this sense of being transported to the day-to-day struggles of the French during the Occupation is exactly what the diaries achieve. As the war progressed, the accumulation of events gradually made an impact on the thinking of the French people. Yet one should never think that with the passing of time, one can trace a linear progression of awareness. The excitement of the summer of 1941 and the entry of the United States into the war, for example, were followed by sharp falls in enthusiasm. The start of 1942 would see British and American failures in the Far East and the Pacific and the advance of Rommel in North Africa.¹⁷⁴ Werth provides a fitting illustration of the relationship between History from above and history from below, between the retrospective and the personal:

*Il y aura bientôt un an, un paysan me disait: «On est comme les bêtes... on se réveille le matin sans rien savoir...» Il disait fort bien ainsi qu'il vivait dans une sorte de nuit historique. Dans cette nuit, je cherchais des signes, des repères. Aujourd'hui, les repères et les signes abondent... Quand une solide convention historique aura fait un système des événements présents (Syrie, Russie), quand tous ces événements seront figés d'un seul bloc, qui pourra prendre la peine de s'intéresser encore aux démarches de chacun pour s'orienter au jour le jour? Les événements apparaîtront à ceux qui furent les plus hésitants, comme un aboutissement logique, qu'ils croiront avoir prévu.*¹⁷⁵

Werth was recording his own personal history but would only have a real appreciation of History when those events that he had lived through were well and truly in the past. The

¹⁷³ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.241. (4.4.42)

¹⁷⁴ Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*, p.193.

¹⁷⁵ Werth, *Déposition*, p.228, (17.7.41)

problem is that the sense of order History provides does not illustrate the personal disorder experienced at the individual level. Werth may have had no idea of his fate but this explains his inability to alter his situation. The diarists were like a rudderless ship. They were powerless to change their course and could only await their fate in a detached manner. This is why the two notions of collaboration and resistance, favoured by historians, are inappropriate to explain the behaviour of the French people, as it implies that these were the only options available to them. The concept of a grey zone is an unsatisfactory one for History from above. Historians prefer to search further in order to place individuals collectively into more concrete groupings. The overwhelming majority of the diarists, however, had nothing concrete on which to base their decisions.

That is not to say that one is unable to detect within this climate of obscurity an awakening to the designs of both Vichy and the German occupation force. The diarists may have ridden the highs and lows of the war on the international front but it would be events on the domestic front that would really have profound effects on opinion. For example, on 20 October 1941, Feldkommandant Hotz was shot in the streets of Nantes, one day after a German soldier had been killed in Bordeaux. The Germans retaliated by killing 48 hostages two days later in Chateaubriant, Nantes and Paris.¹⁷⁶ Germany's resources were tied up on the Eastern Front, which meant that there would be no tolerance of disorder. Although attacks on German soldiers were isolated and carried out only by a tiny minority, their growing number was sufficient to excite the Germans' growing fear of security, which saw the SS replace the Wehrmacht as protectors of the German forces in France. It is clear that the hostage killings had a profound impact on a hitherto resigned and even indifferent population: "*Les Français se sont vraiment réveillés. Tout le programme de collaboration, tout le plan de collaboration médité et élaboré depuis un an (non sans résultats) va échouer.*"¹⁷⁷ There may have been many who had a fear of communism but these executions caused a wave of national outrage. Vichy had always claimed that Collaboration would cause the least harm to the French.

¹⁷⁶ Jackson, *The dark years*, p.182. Between September 1941 and May 1942, 471 hostages were executed by the Germans and these hostages were selected almost exclusively from the ranks of communist prisoners.

¹⁷⁷ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.227. (22.10.41) See also p.233. (13.11.41)

Even Jünger conceded that the reprisal attacks “*dépassent leur but.*”¹⁷⁸ The increase in German repression was made all the more apparent by Vichy’s failure to do anything about it: “*On parle ce soir de l’exécution de cent otages à Paris. Notre gouvernement pourra-t-il obtenir la fin de cette répression qui rend impossible la collaboration si souhaitable entre les deux pays.*”¹⁷⁹ It should be noted, however, that whilst people could understand the motivation behind these attacks on the Germans, there was just as much disapproval of the methods used as there was of the methods used by the Germans to combat them. The fact that Resistance numbers remained so low would suggest that such militant activity was frowned upon by the majority of the French population. They were certainly becoming increasingly hostile to the Vichy regime and the Germans but there was an unwillingness to needlessly provoke the Germans, as the price was too heavy to pay.¹⁸⁰

It was the German Occupation force, therefore, that ultimately helped shape opinion on Vichy. When Stucki, who would represent American interests at Vichy, asked Rist of his opinion on Pétain’s prestige in the Occupied Zone, Rist replied frankly that Pétain’s reputation had suffered greatly. Yet he made the interesting point that “*l’état de l’esprit de la zone occupée est déterminé par l’occupant.*”¹⁸¹ The execution of hostages revealed that active resistance would only incur the wrath of the Germans, and the threat of being occupied loomed over the so-called Free Zone. Yet Vichy’s desire for a rebuilt nation, a close collaboration with Germany and a favoured peace settlement became increasingly harder to sell to a French public increasingly exposed, whether directly or not, to German repression and persecution:

Si la guerre n’avait duré que peu de temps, et si l’Angleterre avait été vaincue en septembre 1940 – le coup d’Etat qui a porté au pouvoir le Maréchal et ses acolytes aurait peut-être pu réussir. Mais voici un an que la bande des

¹⁷⁸ Jünger, *Premier journal parisien*, p.108. (23.2.42) See Duméril, *Journal d’un honnête homme pendant l’occupation*, p.233. (19.7.42)

¹⁷⁹ Duméril, *Journal d’un honnête homme pendant l’occupation*, p.210. (13-14.12.41) This was collaboration not in the ideological sense of supporting the German mission, propagated in particular by the collaborationist press and political parties of the Occupied Zone, but in the original sense of maintaining good relations between the French and Germans. See also Boegner, *Carnets du Pasteur Boegner*, p.146. (22.10.41) and Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.215. (15.12.41)

¹⁸⁰ Gildea, *Marianne in chains*, pp.255-256. When de Gaulle gave the order for a ‘gigantic standing to attention’ between 4:00 pm and 4:05pm on 31 October 1941, as a sign of fraternity and a warning to the Germans of the threat surrounding them, the call was ignored with the exception of the workforce in the biggest Nantes factory.

¹⁸¹ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, pp.254-255. (12.6.42)

*«révolutionnaires» est au pouvoir et le pays a pu se rendre compte de la valeur de leurs personnes et de leurs idées. Le résultat est un dégoût profond pour eux-mêmes et pour tout ce qui touche à eux. Vis-à-vis des Allemands, ils se sont conduits avec la dernière lâcheté. Le pays occupé ne le leur pardonnera pas. Quant à la rénovation nationale, elle se traduit par la vengeance et par la terreur. Le ravitaillement, seul problème qui intéresse le pays, marche aussi mal que possible.*¹⁸²

The increased strain of living under such harsh conditions would see an irrevocable shift away from the concept of collaboration. Yet Guéhenno acknowledged that only with the passage of time would the ineffectiveness of Vichy be fully revealed: “*La logique de la trahison oblige le gouvernement à trahir toujours davantage. Mais la logique de la souffrance augmentera tous les jours la résistance de la nation à la trahison.*”¹⁸³ The latter would bear a greater effect on opinion than the former but it would take time for it to be recognised by every region and individual of France.

What shocked many diarists was that the two separate entities of Vichy and the German Occupation force were beginning to resemble one another. The buffer against Germany or the shield, in Pétain’s words, was increasingly perceived as ineffectual. Indeed, it appeared that Pétain’s shield was being used against the French people to protect the German occupation force. It is interesting to note that Bobkowski totally misinterpreted Pétain’s slogan “*«Je tiens les promesses, même celle des autres.»*”¹⁸⁴ He believed that those *autres* referred to the Germans whereas, as Paxton points out, it was merely a reminder of the Republic’s inability to keep their promises.¹⁸⁵ Admittedly Bobkowski would have been unaware of this, as he was not living in France at that time, but it is interesting to note that he should feel that Pétain was so openly confirming that Vichy was working for the Germans. Werth provides another example of how Vichy seemed to be openly working for Germany’s interests. Vichy passed a law prohibiting the listening to anti-national radio propaganda, which only a year before had been ordered by the German occupation force. Vichy was effectively inciting the French to turn on themselves:

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p.186. (13.9.41)

¹⁸³ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.176. (13.8.41)

¹⁸⁴ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.194. (1.5.41)

¹⁸⁵ Paxton, *Old guard and new order*, p.137. It had taken twenty-four bill proposals, for example, on old-age pensions between 1936 and 1939 only for them to fail in the Senate on March 14 1939. Two years later Pétain would issue an old-age pension law and his slogan, therefore, was meant to show how effective the new regime was compared with the ineffective Republic.

*Au bourg, personne ne me parle du décret. On a peur. Vichy, il y a un an, n'aurait point osé signer ce décret. Preuve nouvelle de ses tâtonnements et de sa marche progressive. Preuve nouvelle que la moindre résistance eût été efficace, que Vichy avait peur de la résistance. Ici se mesure la lâcheté des Français de la zone libre. Mais il faut dire à leur défense qu'ils ne croyaient pas plus à l'occupation de leurs libertés par les Pétain et Darlan qu'ils ne croyaient auparavant à l'occupation de Paris et des deux tiers de la France par les Allemands.*¹⁸⁶

This *marche progressive* was a clear recognition on the part of Werth that Vichy was heading towards fascism and that eventually Vichy and Nazi Germany would become inseparable in identity. Werth implies that this had been deliberate on Vichy's behalf, which may be overly harsh, but he is right to say that no one in 1940 could have foreseen these alleged intentions:

*Il y a un an, jour pour jour, nous arrivons ici, après trente-quatre jours d'exode. Ayant vécu sur les routes, nous savions seulement que la France était vaincue. Mais, quelle que pût être la mutilation imposée par l'Allemagne, nous n'imaginions pas que la France, une partie de la France au moins, travaillerait elle-même à se mutiler, prendrait contre elle-même le parti du vainqueur.*¹⁸⁷

It would be wrong to overemphasise this shift in perception of Vichy. The two paths were merging but the march towards fascism was by no means complete; Vichy was still a long way off the totalitarian state of 1944. This can be attributed to the fact that although Pétain continued to enjoy a separate identity from Vichy, he also continued to exert an influence on how Vichy was perceived. With Pétain at the helm, it was still not possible for some to dismiss Vichy outright. Guéhenno, for example, was still hesitant in his opinion of Pétain. He saw a shift in the Vichy government between the military power under Darlan and the civil power under Laval. He wondered whether Pétain was playing one off the other in order to gain some measure of independence:

*Ce qui est sûr, c'est que la France, les quarante millions de Français ne veulent ni de l'un ni de l'autre. Le gouvernement Pétain avait derrière lui quelques pleutres. Le gouvernement Laval-Darlan n'a personne. Les pleutres eux-mêmes ont honte.*¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Werth, *Déposition*, pp.252-253. (31.10.41) See also Duméril, *Journal d'un honnête homme pendant l'occupation*, p.234, (30.9.42) Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix* p.211, (13.8.41) Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.176, (13.8.41) and Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, pp.206-207. (11.11.41)

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.227. (13.7.41) This was no longer collaboration in the original intended use of the word, as Vichy was adopting a more complicit and subjugated role rather than a cooperative one.

¹⁸⁸ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.251. (20.4.42)

Werth held no such doubts over the intentions of Pétain. He made no distinction between Pétain and Vichy; both, in his eyes, were dishonouring France. Yet at the same time he was aware that many refused to give up the idea that Pétain was protecting France. His wife, Suzanne, received a letter from a bourgeois woman living in the provinces, who claimed: “*Un vieillard magnifique est en train de nous sauver et beaucoup ne veulent pas le comprendre.*”¹⁸⁹ Werth was stunned that people could be so blinded at this stage of the Occupation and were unable to detect the changes in Pétain:

*Un maréchal douloureux va signer la paix. Elle naîtra toute seule après quelques semaines, trois mois ou six mois d'armistice. La légende naît d'un maréchal, dont le prestige militaire intimidera Hitler. Puis vient le temps du «Nous, Philippe Pétain, chef de l'Etat français...» Puis naît la légende du maréchal dressé contre l'Allemagne, ou plutôt du maréchal temporisateur. Puis la légende du maréchal réorganisateur. On suit facilement aujourd'hui les étapes de la momerie au nazisme.*¹⁹⁰

The abandoning of Vichy by the French people did not occur, therefore, in a rapid or uniform manner. Perhaps Werth's more overt disappointment in Pétain's popularity is an indication that Pétain was more likely to be venerated in the Unoccupied Zone, as he was seen to have done more to protect those living there than those living in the Occupied Zone, who were already under direct German rule. There may have been a good deal of ignorance for those living in the Occupied Zone as they were not exposed directly, for example, to Pétain's goodwill tours or Vichy propaganda. Perhaps there was a greater reluctance to see behind the 'legends' of Pétain in the Unoccupied Zone because they had seemingly more to lose than those living in the Occupied Zone. Guéhenno was shocked to see, on his visit to the *zone libre*, children enrolled in the *Jeunesses*, the French equivalent of Hitler Youth Camps, and adults all wearing the Vichy *francisque* emblem. Behind all these trappings of not only Vichy but also Nazi Germany, he asked: “*Où est la France?*”¹⁹¹ Yet as Bobkowsi revealed the notion of a *double jeu* was a powerful one for all the French: “*Tout le monde se laisse attendrir. L'opinion générale est que le vieux gagne du temps et masque son jeu. Cependant, trop de faits le contre-disent. En définitive, Vichy est un sphinx.. sans énigmes.*”¹⁹² Historians

¹⁸⁹ Werth, *Déposition*, p.259. (4.1.42)

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.244. (30.9.41) See also Galtier-Boissière, *Journal*, p.60 (5.9.41) and Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.173. (26.6.41)

¹⁹¹ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.272. (17.7.42)

¹⁹² Bobkowsi, *En guerre et en paix*, p.274. (13.1.42)

have noted that the public opinion of this period was characterised by indifference and lassitude.¹⁹³ There is certainly evidence in the diaries to support this: “*Situation peu changée, massacre toujours. Trois alertes ici. L'égoïsme dit «pourvu que ça finisse vite, n'importe comment !»*”¹⁹⁴ Yet that does not reveal the whole picture. What had changed from the first year of the Occupation was that German repression and Vichy's reaction to it were slowly shaking the French out of that indifference and apathy. The indifference of the first year, therefore, should not be confused with the lassitude of the second year, since a definite evolution in thinking had taken place. The weight of time and the uncertainty over the future served as a deterrent that was perceptible during the second year. This is why the change in attitude would not be accompanied by a change in behaviour.

Durer versus espérer.

Right from the outset of the Occupation, the diarists never felt able to change their situation themselves. They were resigned to the fact that all they could do was wait for history to take its course. This section is concerned with examining how the Anglo-American landing in North Africa on November 8, 1942 shook up this concept of *durer* amongst certain diarists. Until that event occurred, the diarists had only their individual hopes and desires to sustain them through the oppressive waiting. Their hope was a means of lasting until the end. The landing, however, would cause some diarists' hopes to rise too soon and too far, which provoked a greater impatience for the war to end. The fact that the war continued as before only served to compound that impatience. Their raised hopes, in this respect, were more of a hindrance than an ally to these diarists. This sentiment goes against the contention of historians such as Paxton who believe that

¹⁹³ For example, Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy*, p.257. The following words were used to describe the French population in the second year of the Occupation: *amorphe, inerte, timorée, apathique, sceptique, retirée dans sa coquille*.

¹⁹⁴ Duménil, *Journal d'un honnête homme pendant l'occupation*, p.162. (1.10.41) See also Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, pp.334-335 (11.6.42) and Werth, *Déposition*, pp.328-329. (30.7.42)

French opinion followed a linear progression.¹⁹⁵ History from below reveals that this process was far more complex than what Paxton is willing to concede.

Until as late as the end of 1942, hope had been the only option open to the diarists awaiting the outcome of the war. This process of *durer* could only be alleviated by hope but for well over two years these diarists had endured the Occupation with no real cause for optimism that their situation would change. The Russians had at least provided effective resistance but their situation, particularly in Stalingrad, still seemed precarious. De Beauvoir claimed that the French simply had no reason to believe in an Allied victory in 1941. America had not yet entered the war, the Desert War, at least initially, was favouring the Axis powers, and having been thrown out of the Balkans, the Allies had no base in Europe from which to launch an attack. The anti-Semitic persecutions increased and German propaganda was relentless: “*Nous voulions garder l'espoir, mais l'horizon était sombre.*”¹⁹⁶ Such scepticism would last well beyond the initial uncertainty over the war's outcome. The only option, therefore, was to wait and hope for the situation to improve:

*Je ne tiens sans doute plus beaucoup à la vie, mais j'ai cette idée fixe: durer. Faire durer encore quelque temps et moi-même et mes dépendances: linge, vêtements, chaussures, espérance, confiance, sourire, bonne grâce; les faire durer jusqu'au revoir. En vue de quoi je me fais économe, parcimonieux de tout, afin que rien du tout cela ne s'épuise avant l'heure, par grande crainte que cette guerre ne tire en longueur, par grand désir et grand espoir d'en voir la fin.*¹⁹⁷

Although Gide was writing his diary in North Africa at the time of the Anglo-American landing, the fact that his observations were essentially the same as those writing in metropolitan France proves the existence of a common theme among the diarists. They were all anticipating the end but until that time came the only certainties that they could hold on to were their individual desires and hopes. There may have been differences in what they hoped would happen in the end but they were all conscious of the fact of having to ‘last’ until the end.

¹⁹⁵ Paxton, *Old guard and new order*, pp.234-235. Paxton believed that a crude graph of public opinion would see two lines, representing support for Pétain and de Gaulle, declining and rising respectively and intersecting after the occupation of the *zone libre* in November 1942.

¹⁹⁶ De Beauvoir, *La force de l'âge*, pp.496-497.

¹⁹⁷ Gide, *Journal*, p.160. (31.12.42)

The diarists were, for the most part, hoping that Germany's fortunes would take a turn for the worse, and that the Allies would rescue them from their German captors. Guéhenno had asked the question at the end of 1941:

*Quel homme ou quel événement pourrait rendre à ce pays le sens de sa dignité propre? [Le pays] vit dans de telles conditions qu'il ne pourra de longtemps agir qu'en réaction à des événements extérieurs; la défaite de l'Allemagne?*¹⁹⁸

What is significant to take out of this is that Guéhenno could not foresee that France's dignity could be salvaged from within France. History would prove that this man would be de Gaulle and that this event would be the Allied landing in Normandy and the subsequent liberation of France. Yet this was of no comfort to the diarists, who had to endure the Occupation until that occurred. There was no definite light at the end of the tunnel for them to make out but only the hope that there would be an end to their plight. Rist commented, in October 1942, that the French were still waiting for the British to make an effective contribution to the war:

*L'an dernier à pareille époque nous disions: si les Russes tiennent jusqu'au 15 septembre, alors viendra l'attaque des Anglais et l'hiver, et la chance tournera. Rien n'est venu sauf la défaite des Anglais à Tobrouk. Cette année nous disons de nouveau: «si les Russes tiennent jusqu'au 15 octobre, les Anglo-Américains auront le temps d'intervenir à la vieille de l'hiver, et la chance tournera». Mais les Anglais ne font rien. Leurs raids sur l'Allemagne sont trop espacés pour produire un sérieux effet moral. On n'est même pas tranquille sur leur sort en Libye. Ainsi au début de la quatrième année ils sont incapables d'aucune action, même avec l'appui américain.*¹⁹⁹

Furthermore, opinion on de Gaulle was very much divided.²⁰⁰ He may have given hope to the French in their hour of need – although very few people ever heard his address to the French people in the summer of 1940 – but this did not mean he was necessarily perceived as the saviour of France. In June 1940, Rist recognised “*l'appel courageux et émouvant du général de Gaulle, qui nous redonne l'espoir et la confiance*”,²⁰¹ yet even as late as August 1944, he commented:

Charles de Gaulle a débarqué à Cherbourg avec Juin, d'Argenlieu et Kœnig. Ce dernier vient d'être nommé gouverneur de Paris. Dans le Midi, c'est de Lattre

¹⁹⁸ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.222. (12.12.41) See Drieu, *Journal*, pp.312-313. (25.11.42) This was the same attitude that Drieu adopted in that he looked upon Germany to rectify the internal problems that afflicted France.

¹⁹⁹ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.280. (11.10.42)

²⁰⁰ Opinion towards de Gaulle will be explored in Chapter Three: Part Two.

²⁰¹ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.73. (19.6.40)

*de Tassigny. Nous voilà en plein gouvernement de militaires. Bien fou qui n'aurait pas des inquiétudes pour l'avenir. Car tous ces gens viennent plus ou moins de l'Action française et haïssent la République.*²⁰²

The catastrophic defeat of 1940 had caused a deep mistrust of all those serving in the military and it is equally significant to remember that Pétain's prestige had been forged during the First World War. The French, therefore, were passively awaiting this man or event blindly in the fervent hope that there would be eventually someone or something of sufficient importance to change their fate.

The Anglo-American landing in North Africa on November 8, 1942, gave the illusion of that major significant event. History would prove that this was not the decisive event that would bring about real change to the daily lives of the French, namely the end of German occupation in France. Indeed, it brought about occupation to parts of France that had yet to experience directly the German occupation force. It could be seen, however, as a foretaste of the Normandy landing in that suddenly the external forces the French had been waiting for appeared tangible. The end of the war still seemed a distant prospect, and the war continued to be fought in distant lands. Yet the concentration and closer proximity of the Allied forces in North Africa caused a change in thinking: an Allied victory now seemed likely whereas before there had only been hope. Bobkowski observed how happy the French had become with the news of the British victory at El-Alamein,²⁰³ and when the Anglo-American forces landed in North Africa, he remarked in his diary: "*Des miracles commencent à se produire.*"²⁰⁴ It was one thing to hope for an Allied victory but it was another thing to see how that could actually happen. The North African landing, therefore, had a profound psychological impact:

Rien ne fut, depuis la débâcle, aussi riche en espoir. «Tournant de l'histoire», phase nouvelle. Déjà il me semble qu'entre la débâcle et ce débarquement, le

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p.428. (22.8.44) See Paxton, *Old guard and new order*, pp.35-41. Pétain fitted the national mood perfectly. Internally he was a substitute for politics and a barrier to revolution and externally he was a victorious general, who would make no war. No Resistance groups in France supported de Gaulle at first, and his failed attempt at Dakar, in September 1940, to win over pro-Vichy generals only served to confirm that decision.

²⁰³ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.375. (6.11.42) This altered the perception that the only real fighting was taking place in Russia.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.378. (8.11.42)

*temps s'est rétréci. Ces deux années et demie perdent de leur dimension et de leur poids. Elles vont rejoindre la guerre de 1914 et la guerre de 1870.*²⁰⁵

Werth reveals not only the extent of how much he had eagerly awaited this event but also how the weight of time had affected him prior to this perceived *tournant de l'histoire*.

The landing finally provided something that could erase those prolonged years of silent suffering. When the Germans occupied the so-called *zone libre*, it gave Werth the impression that events were precipitating towards the end:

*Je suis incapable de mesurer l'événement. C'est sans doute l'effet de l'isolement où je vis depuis deux ans et demi: le choc de tout événement imprévu me donne du ton, une énergie, qui n'est, hélas! qu'une énergie à vide. L'envahissement me redresse, comme m'avait redressé le débarquement. Ce n'est plus l'attente inerte. Je fouille l'avenir. Je voudrais me délivrer de mon immobilité, m'engager dans une armée, m'engager dans l'événement. J'en cherche les moyens et je n'en trouve que d'absurdes.*²⁰⁶

Suddenly, Werth was excited about the future, as the outcome of the war appeared more certain. This was no longer *attentisme inerte*, as he felt that the clarification of what the future entailed enabled him to participate on a more conscious level. Werth's isolated situation should not be seen as the cause of this mindset. Guéhenno, for example, who was kept busy by his teaching work in Paris, also believed that the landing had changed the hitherto monotonous rhythm of the war:

*Cette joie que nous avons sentie hier matin. Les Américains avaient débarqué partout en Afrique du Nord. [...] Le fait est d'immense conséquence, peut changer le rythme de la guerre, tout précipiter. La situation redevient ce qu'elle eût été sans la trahison de juin 40.*²⁰⁷

The implication, moreover, is that the landing gave the impression not only that the Occupation seemed much shorter but also that the end seemed much nearer. This change in thinking is aptly illustrated by Rist. He remarked before the landing in August 1942:

Les affaires sont nulles ou liées exclusivement à la guerre. On sent que rien n'importe, que tout peut être bouleversé par les événements militaires d'un instant à l'autre, que le régime bancaire, les entreprises sont dominés par l'issue de la guerre sur laquelle nous ne pouvons rien. Tout le reste ne compte pas. On essaye de maintenir ce qui existe en vue d'un avenir inconnu. Là-dessus les esprits se heurtent – envisageant cet avenir avec des espoirs, des craintes,

²⁰⁵ Werth, *Déposition*, p.381. (8.11.42) See also, pp.382-383. (8.11.42) The significance of this event is represented by Werth's overwhelming desire to tell everyone this momentous news but at the same time his wariness of openly expressing his joy to strangers.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.384. (11.11.42)

²⁰⁷ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.298. (9.11.42)

*des désirs qui diffèrent de l'un à l'autre et qui ne s'expriment qu'indirectement. La majorité cependant attend et espère la victoire alliée. Les autres sont ceux qui se considèrent comme supérieurement informés ou intelligents.*²⁰⁸

Rist, from his banking work, accorded a greater importance to the war than many other diarists did but he shared their belief that France's salvation lay in the hands of external forces. The only problem was that the events leading up to the landing did nothing to comfort the French that their individual hopes could be realised. The increased repression of the Germans and Vichy's growing subjugation may well have affected the French directly but it did nothing to change their belief that their fate remained beyond their control. The landing in North Africa, however, made the war's end less open to varied possibilities: "*La question n'est plus de savoir si les Allemands seront battus, mais comment ils le seront.*"²⁰⁹ There was still no idea *how* the Germans would be defeated but there was a growing belief that external events spelt the end for the Germans, which enabled the French to envisage a clearer future. Moreover, it confirmed that France's salvation lay in the hands of external forces, which, in turn, split the Vichy government further apart from the French people:

*En réalité Vichy a cessé d'exister pour la majorité des Français. Depuis que l'Algérie est sauvée de l'emprise ennemie, et qu'on entrevoit la libération de la Méditerranée, et un effondrement de l'Italie déjà bombardée à Gênes et Turin, et qui va se trouver à la merci des aérodromes de l'Afrique du Nord et de Malte, tout le monde sent que c'est là que le sort de la France est en train de se décider. Devant ce grand événement, les intrigues de Vichy pour conserver son prestige au pouvoir ne comptent pas.*²¹⁰

The fact that the end appeared less distant created an impatience for that end to arrive. It is important to note, however, that this impatience for the Occupation to end was not felt equally by the diarists. The difference in opinion lay in the personal situations of each diarist. Gide, for example, who spent most of the Occupation in North Africa, did not experience the rigours of Occupied France. It was perhaps easier for him to endure the rigours of the war than others living in occupied France, whose access to basic needs was greatly restricted. His casual remark at the time of the landing was very similar to Cocteau's attitude:

²⁰⁸ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.267. (23.8.42)

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.289. (11.11.42) Rist saw Italy as the next natural progression for the Americans but after that he still had no idea how France would be liberated or Germany defeated.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.293. (20.11.42)

*Occupation de la France «libre» par l'Allemagne; de l'Afrique du Nord par les U.S.A... Les événements m'enlèvent toute envie de rien dire. Toujours tenté de penser que cela n'a aucune importance, au fond, et ne m'intéresse pas, quand bien j'y devrais perdre ma tête.*²¹¹

Cocteau, who was consumed by his own work, was largely indifferent to the war, whereas Werth was increasingly impatient for his rural exile to end. Rist was so excited at the news of the landing that he found himself unable to work: “*Je n'arrive pas à travailler ces jours-ci. Comment concentrer sa pensée sur l'histoire des doctrines économiques quant tout notre sort futur est suspendu aux actions militaires?*”²¹²

In that respect, there were some diarists who were more impatient to see the end of the war than others. It would follow, therefore, that those who were more impatient to see the end of the war would be more susceptible to the hope that the North Africa landing would spell the end of the war:

*«Qu'ils viennent vite!...» disait Andrée François. «Qu'ils viennent vite!» disent la rue, la loge et la boutique. «Qu'ils viennent vite!» disons-nous tous. Il est temps. Nous vivons une vie qui n'est plus que d'attente, d'oscillation de la peur à la rage.*²¹³

With that greater expectation, however, came the bitter reality that the war, with all its unfathomable destruction, would still last a long time:

*Les raisons d'espérer augmentent chaque jour. Et pourtant il me semble que, depuis le jour du débarquement, notre tonus a diminué, que notre allégresse est plus incertaine. Le débarquement, ce fut d'abord comme un conte des Mille et une Nuits. Nous crûmes que tout allait se terminer par enchantement, par un coup de baguette. A la buvette aussi le tonus a baissé. L'espoir est monté trop haut, trop vite.*²¹⁴

The Anglo-American landing, in effect, did nothing to outwardly change the French situation. The war continued, and the Germans still occupied France; indeed all of France. Cocteau gave the very fitting analogy:

²¹¹ Gide, *Journal des années noires*, p.144. (12.11.42)

²¹² Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.292. (15.11.42)

²¹³ Werth, *Déposition*, p.634. (6.5.44) This comment may have come close to the end of the Occupation but there were many similar comments recorded much earlier on. See also p.435: *Que c'est long de tuer l'Allemagne et le nazisme ou le nazisme seul. Qu'on fasse plus vite, qu'on en finisse! Qu'on nous laisse à d'autres soucis!*²¹³ (24.2.43) See also Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.347: *Approchons-nous vraiment de la délivrance! On vit non plus dans l'anxiété mais dans l'impatience.* (6.8.43) And also Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.300: *Mais on se sent perdu dans quelque chose d'énorme qui passe l'entendement même. Du moins sent-on que l'espoir va désormais grandir avec les jours...* (14.11.42)

²¹⁴ Werth, *Déposition*, p.392. (27.11.42)

*Ce qui se passe dans le monde. La guerre est trop longue et ennuyeuse. Les gens se réindividualisent. Il arrive ce qui arrive au théâtre. Si la pièce est intéressante et courte, le public forme un seul bloc; on dirait un enfant de douze ans qu'il faut prendre par le rire ou par les larmes. Si la pièce est longue et ennuyeuse, le public se réindividualise. Une dame tousse, une autre consulte le programme, un monsieur dort, un autre regarde autour de lui, etc.*²¹⁵

The landing had broken the monotony of the Occupation. Suddenly, something interesting or important had taken place that could capture everybody's attention. Unfortunately its effects would not be enough to retain everybody's attention. That interest would quickly dissipate with the realisation that the war would continue as before, which saw the French revert to their individual desires and hopes.

The landing, therefore, provided false hope for some diarists. It gave the illusion of clarity in a hitherto world of confusion and uncertainty.²¹⁶ The diarists were still restricted to playing a waiting game but the feeling was that the end was nigh. The landing had revealed the way out, which saw certain diarists focus exclusively on that exit point. They neglected to think about the rescue process itself: how long it might take and what it entailed. Rist gave the apt analogy the following year: "*Nous sommes ici comme des mineurs enterrés qui entendent les coups des sauveurs qui approchent, mais qui sont encore loin. Il n'y a plus qu'une chose qui occupe: combien de temps?*"²¹⁷ The problem was that even at that late stage of the war in 1943 when Rist made the comment, the French would still have to wait a year for their *sauveurs* to arrive on French soil. The Allies did make their way into Europe through Italy but they made very slow progress. This was particularly vexing for Werth, as the closer the end appeared to him, the longer it seemed for the end to come. He remarked at the start of 1944:

*Les Allemands, à qui chaque jour apporte une goutte de défaite, semblent plus redoutables qu'au temps où ils détenaient la totalité de la victoire. «Ca ne va pas vite», dit Andrée François, qui a écouté la radio. L'atmosphère est lourde, la durée est lourde. Dans vingt ans, tout sera rassemblé en deux pages de manuel scolaire, réduit à des faits calligraphiés, avec pleins et déliés.*²¹⁸

The evolution of French opinion during the Occupation is a source of contention amongst historians. There was a significant shift in opinion after the Anglo-American

²¹⁵ Cocteau, *Journal*, p.226. (5.1.43)

²¹⁶ Werth, *Déposition*, pp.289-290. (11.11.42) See also p.292. (15.11.42)

²¹⁷ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.357. (12.9.43)

²¹⁸ Werth, *Déposition*, p.560. (28.1.44)

landing but at the same time this should not be confused with a significant shift in behaviour. Moreover, this shift in opinion did not remain constant. The overwhelming majority remained passive throughout the Occupation but within that broad passive framework there was still scope for variant thinking. Just as it seemed likely in the summer of 1940 that Germany would be victorious, so too did it appear after November 1942 that Germany would be defeated. That is not to say, however, that in between this period, or indeed after it, there was a linear awareness that Germany would be defeated. Laborie disagrees with Paxton that the evolution of opinion, despite some irregularities, was linear and followed a geometrical logic.²¹⁹ Laborie was concerned with French public opinion at a popular level and, therefore, his findings were much more ambivalent and ambiguous than those of Paxton, whose research was concerned on a higher level with the Vichy government. Paxton wrote of the French people:

*Si l'on traçait un graphique grossier de l'opinion publique entre 1940 et 1944, on verrait que la quasi-totalité de la population était pour Pétain en juin 1940 et pour de Gaulle en août 1944, le point d'intersection de ces deux courbes, l'une décroissante, l'autre ascendante, se situant après l'occupation de la zone libre en novembre 1942.*²²⁰

His argument bears a striking resemblance to the cynical observation of Bernanos, who wrote from Brazil:

*Si l'on pouvait, en effet, de 1940 à 1945, tracer exactement, mois par mois, la courbe des chances d'une victoire alliée, on verrait qu'elle coïnciderait parfaitement avec celle des effectifs grandissants d'un prétendu parti de la Victoire, qui fut tour à tour celui de la victoire allemande puis de la victoire alliée, par une curieuse application d'un vieux principe de physique élémentaire, celui des vases communicants.*²²¹

Is it coincidental that both Paxton and Bernanos shared the same view, even though they published their work for different reasons and at different times? They both wrote from a detached perspective: Bernanos wrote his thoughts in Brazil and Paxton gathered his arguments for his historical research from the German archives. They may have both had the advantage of being able to step back from the personal experiences of those living in Occupied France but at the same time they both had no personal concept of *durée* in Occupied France.

²¹⁹ Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy*, p.16.

²²⁰ Paxton, *Old guard and new order*, p.225.

²²¹ Bernanos, *Français si vous saviez*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1978) p.273.

Both these views fail to take into account the individual indecision and oscillation, which afflicted the diarists. Even those who had made irrevocable decisions were still affected by oscillations in opinion.²²² The diaries, written *en situation*, reveal that opinion was much more ambiguous and complex. There was no overnight change in thinking but, rather, a series of constantly changing and conflicting emotions over time. Werth had already observed before the landing an abandonment of Vichy and its policy of collaboration with Germany, which had been fostered by the increased repression of the German Occupation force after 1941.²²³ The landing, and the increased likelihood of a German defeat, did serve to reinforce that decision but it by no means set it in concrete. History from above confirms Werth's prediction that the French would all become *gaullistes* but these *gaullistes* at no stage comprised a homogenous group. Just as one could be in 1940 pro-Pétain but not necessarily pro-Vichy so too could one be *gaulliste* after 1942 but not necessarily anti-Pétain: "*Il n'est pas impossible que la protestation du glorieux vieillard attendrisse sentimentalement les foules, qui ont déjà oublié l'hommage qu'il rendit à la générosité de Hitler.*"²²⁴ Paxton appears on even shakier ground when he maintains that acceptance of the Vichy regime was ultimately collaboration in a functional sense:

*Public opinion, then, offered a broad basis of acquiescence within which active participation in the Vichy regime was made legitimate. Only in the spring of 1943, after the whole of France had been occupied and after young men began to be drafted to work in German factories, do the intelligence reports consider opinion to have turned decisively against the regime.*²²⁵

This argument raises more questions than it answers. Paxton assumes that the French people accepted the Vichy regime up until 1943. Yet tacit approval of Vichy in 1940 should not be confused with rapid disenchantment during the period 1941-1942 and yet both come under the same banner of acceptance in the eyes of Paxton. And what is the definition of *decisively against* given that there was never any attempt to overthrow the Vichy government?

What the private testimonies offer History is a reminder that the divergent experiences of the diarists should deter one from drawing simplistic conclusions about

²²² See Drieu, *Journal*, p.301, (7.11.42) pp.410-411, (29.7.44) pp.345-346, (16.6.43) and p.370. (1.3.44)

²²³ Werth, *Déposition*, p.349. (23.9.42)

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.384. (11.11.42) See also p.642. (17.5.44)

²²⁵ Paxton, *Old guard and new order*, pp.240-241.

French behaviour during the Occupation years. Pétain's call for an armistice was well received but he enjoyed far from unanimous support. Similarly, enthusiasm for Vichy's call for change should not be interpreted as enthusiasm for the regime's policies. It was the German military authorities who ultimately governed behaviour in both zones. The policy of Collaboration was overwhelmingly dismissed but the diarists observed that there was an equal amount of antipathy for the notion of Resistance. Vichy may have been independently involved in the persecution of the Jews but French opinion towards Vichy and Germany's anti-Semitic policies is infinitely more difficult to decipher. That is not to say that the testimonial divergence prohibits one from detecting general trends in the experiences of the French during the Occupation. It is just that one must be always mindful of the constant oscillation in opinion generated by events and different personal experiences. The diarists did observe during the years 1941-1942 a definite hardening in opinion towards the German occupation force and a greater disillusionment with the Vichy government. The spirit of partnership, which had been so encouraged in 1940 by both the Germans and Vichy, was undermined thereafter by the growing repression of the Germans and Vichy's subjugation as well as its submissiveness. The hope of getting through to the other side may have become more apparent after the Allied landing in North Africa with the realisation that the end was nigh. Yet this does not mean that the diarists were incognisant of having to endure the Occupation until that end came.

CHAPTER THREE

La vie quotidienne

Bien qu'on soit en guerre, ou en armistice, ou en paix, l'être humain, tant qu'il est en vie a le souci de sa nourriture et de son habitat.¹

Introduction: stratégies de survie.

Henri Amouroux, in the preface to his study of everyday life for the average French citizen during the Occupation, argued that historians have traditionally tended to emphasise, or focus exclusively on the major figures or dramatic events of the Occupation:

Ils étudient le gouvernement de Vichy, les rapports franco-allemands, les querelles franco-anglaises, ils racontent les combats pour la Libération, les exploits des meilleurs résistants, ou se penchent longuement sur la psychologie du maréchal Pétain et de Pierre Laval. [...] Ce sont des livres d'Histoire. Et l'Histoire est peuplée, on le sait, de plus de ministres, de généraux, de financiers, d'explorateurs que de boutiquiers, de bouchers, de cousettes, de cheminots, de ménagères et d'enfants pâles.²

Amouroux preferred to be “*un historien de quarante millions d'anonymes*”, studying life at the mundane level. To focus on an elite clique excludes the experiences of the forty million French people, who endured the Occupation rather than being actively involved in its evolution. The fact that every diarist consciously chose to record their everyday concerns is an indication that they often eclipsed the global concerns of the Occupation. Werth recorded how his son Claude, who was eighteen years old, remarked to his mother:

«Quand j'étais un enfant, je rêvais de vivre dans une époque extraordinaire, pleine de grands événements historiques. Je croyais qu'en une telle époque, le mesquin, le quotidien de la vie ne comptait plus. Je vis une telle époque et

¹ Toesca, *Cinq ans de patience*, p.67. (5.7.40)

² Henri Amouroux, *La vie des Français sous l'Occupation*, (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1990) p.10. Richard Cobb, (*French and Germans, Germans and French: A personal interpretation of France under two Occupations*, (London: University Press of New England, 1983)) was another who preferred a more personal approach. See also Jacquet, Annick, & Todorov, Tzvetan, *Guerre et paix sous l'occupation* (Paris: Arléa, 1996).

*je vois que le médiocre, le mesquin, le quotidien pèsent si lourd qu'ils ne pourraient peser davantage.»*³

The infinitesimal might well have wider repercussions for the behaviour of the French people than the grander concepts favoured by many historians. A global study of Vichy, for example, requires an understanding beyond the machinations within the private walls of the tiny spa town. The indirect consequences of Vichy are just as important to examine. This chapter is concerned with examining the diarists' reactions to the banal rather than the extraordinary. The *exode* and the *débâcle*, the *rafles* and shooting of hostages, and the Allied landings in North Africa and Normandy were all dramatic events for the diarists but they were relatively infrequent when one considers that they occurred over a period of more than four years. There were more constant and pressing concerns that affected the diarists, which raises the question what effect did the everyday life of the diarists have upon their attitudes and behaviour? The diaries are replete with references to the difficulties of finding provisions or clothing. The fact that they elected to write about these everyday issues on a regular basis indicates that the daily rhythms of their private lives were often more pressing than those of the public sphere.

The personal nature of the *journaux intimes* is a reminder that the diarists responded to events differently, often depending on whether they were affected directly or not. Roussin felt relieved that Marseilles appeared to be unaffected by the war but Werth felt ashamed that the Jewish statutes questioned his French nationality. The weight of these individual concerns would encourage different reactions amongst the diarists. Some diarists, such as Deharme, would refuse to acknowledge the *événementiel*: “*Au loin, dans le monde, les grands événements font leur tapage vain.*”⁴ Cocteau, for example, would disavow any notion of politics: “*La radio anglaise m'accuse de «collaborer». La presse franco-allemande m'accuse d'être gaulliste. Voilà ce qui arrive aux esprits libres qui refusent de se mêler de politique et n'y comprennent rien.*”⁵ Roussin would initially block out any notion of the war: “*Je ne voyais pas en quoi la guerre me concernait encore.*”⁶ The weight of time would

³ Werth, *Déposition*, pp.484-485. (6.6.43)

⁴ Deharme, *Les années perdues*, p.77. (25.4.41)

⁵ Cocteau, *Journal*, p.372. (1.10.43) See also Duméril, *Journal d'un honnête homme pendant l'occupation*, p.129: *Pas le temps de m'en occuper, et neutralité absolue de ma part.* (4.6.41)

⁶ Roussin, *Rideau gris et habit vert*, pp.101-102.

see Werth entertain at times the temptation of retreat: "*J'attends Suzanne. Je me fous de la guerre, je me fous de la civilisation. J'attends.*"⁷

Each diarist had different strategies for coping with the Occupation. They all had differing views on their work and their general everyday behaviour. The Parisian-based diarists are privileged in Part One of this chapter simply because they comprise by far the largest regional group amongst the selected diarists. Whilst they may well form a specific group and are confined to a specific area of France, the dilemmas they faced represent a microcosm of the problems faced by every individual living in France. The first section is concerned with their attitudes to work, particularly those who worked in the artistic field. The Germans wanted the French to feel that they could return to life as normal but to do so could have far-reaching implications for those individuals concerned. Many artists would be singled out after the Liberation for having supported the German cause. The second section is concerned with the wider issue of how the Parisians survived the war in terms of their psychological approach to the Occupation. The diarists were split between the notion that the French had the innate ability to adapt to calamitous events and the notion that they had gone too far in their resignation of defeat.

Part Two is concerned with examining how the preoccupation with survival prevented the French from forming a united front against the German invaders. The first section deals with how the material decline impacted on the diarists. The effects of the Occupation took time to filter down to every region of France. The German need for French materials would only become more insatiable as their fortunes in North Africa and Europe deteriorated, which would come to affect the diarists on a more global scale. That is not to say that the material decline came to be felt uniformly by the diarists but, rather, that every diarist felt compelled to write about the difficulties of everyday life during the Occupation. Historians have tended to focus on political or social divisions rather than examining the differences between the rich and the poor. The diaries suggest that there were two Frances: the haves and the have-nots. These divisions did not necessarily run along social or political lines. Peasant farmers were often in a privileged position as they had ready access to the most important commodity: food. Those who lived in rural areas were often better off than those who lived in urban areas but those living in the cities who had connections

⁷ Werth, *Déposition*, p.143. (23-25.12.40)

with the countryside were invariably better off. The second section is concerned with examining how the notion of *patrie* was undermined by the constant preoccupation with survival. It also raises the question whether such notions have any relevance in such times of individual turmoil. Finally, there is an examination of the narrative conclusion of the private diaries. The Liberation did not necessarily see an end to the problems encountered during the Occupation, and it is interesting to note which diarists continued to write well after the Liberation. The focus of this chapter, however, is less concerned with the chronological dimension than with the thematic dimension, namely the feeling of powerlessness amongst the diarists to alter their situation and their attempts to deal with the situation as best they could.

Part One

Jouer à la balle

*On n'ose plus prononcer le mot de bonheur dans ces temps torturés. Et pourtant, des millions d'êtres, aujourd'hui, sont à sa recherche, et ces années ne sont pour eux qu'un sursis qui n'en finit plus, et au bout duquel ils espèrent que leur bonheur à nouveau sera possible. Qui donc pourra les en blâmer? Et qui pourrait dire qu'ils ont tort? Que serait la justice sans la chance du bonheur, de quoi servirait la liberté à la misère?*⁸

Travailler sous l'Occupation: Art for art's sake or Le silence de la mer?

One problem remained constant for the diarists throughout the Occupation: how to behave in a time when the country was occupied by a foreign military force. The suddenness of defeat and Germany's military dominance had initially lent itself to the idea that the war would not last long. The diarists had to adapt to this change in thinking as the Occupation progressed but at the same time they had to continue with their lives as best they could. One wanted to act in the best way that one could but one also had to think about one's own livelihood and the survival of one's own family. Mauriac recalled the following image, which provides the title for the first part of this chapter:

Péguy admirait la réponse du jeune Louis de Gonzague à qui, durant une récréation, ses camarades demandaient ce qu'il ferait si on venait leur annoncer que la fin du monde était pour l'instant même: «Je continuerais de jouer à la balle...» Et c'est vrai qu'il est dur, tandis que le sol se dérobe sous nos pieds, de continuer de jouer à la balle, surtout lorsque le jeu consiste pour nous à écrire des livres, des articles. Un métier manuel occupe le corps, il tend à un résultat positif et dont l'utilité s'impose. Mais l'écrivain, pris dans le remous d'événements énormes, lutte contre le néant de ses imaginations et de ses idées. Qu'elles paraissent vaines, les spéculations du clerc, au milieu de cet univers bouleversé! Et pourtant la France ne survit que dans la mesure où chacun continue de faire ce qu'il faisait à la place où il a été surpris par la catastrophe. Une activité individuelle interrompue, c'est la vie du pays qui baisse d'autant. Il faut que notre cœur continue de

⁸ Albert Camus, *Combat*, (22.12.44), Azéma, Jean-Pierre & Bédarida, François, (ed.s) *Le régime de Vichy et les Français*, (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1992) p.621.

*battre. Les longues maladies sont une épreuve pour le cœur. «Il s'agit que le cœur tienne» disent les médecins: celui de la France tient, et il tiendra.*⁹

Mauriac's devout Catholic faith was in tune with such an optimistic stance. The French may well have been catastrophically defeated and had to endure the German Occupation of France but at the same time life had to go on. There was no point in putting down the ball and renouncing oneself to the demise of the world. The best attitude was to try to live one's life as one had done before the defeat.

There was nothing one could do to prevent the German presence in France so many felt that there was no sense in brooding on it. Werth asked the question: "*Qui a raison? Le père François, qui veut être libre, ou la concierge, qui me disait à Paris: «Allemande ou Française, je tirerai toujours le cordon...»?*"¹⁰ There may have been a difference in attitude between the two but there may well not have been any discernible difference in terms of behaviour. To actively fight against the Germans was just as bad as joining them in their fight, as both choices required putting down the ball. Yet often those who continued their work found themselves in a compromising position: to continue to work might be perceived as support for the Germans but to refuse to work might well come at the expense of oneself or one's family. Those like Toesca and Duméril, who worked alongside the Germans, could justifiably feel that they were best serving French interests yet that does not change the fact that their jobs both required them to work alongside the Germans every day. This dilemma affected almost every working individual: the grocer, who could sell his stock to regular clients at fair prices or to the Germans at a premium price; the factory worker¹¹, who worked for the German war effort. One had to weigh up the ethical side with the basic need for survival: "*Je suis morte de fatigue. Si je travaillais pour les Allemands, j'aurai deux fois moins de mal et je gagnerais quarante-cinq francs par jour. Se le refuser au nom de ses principes?*"¹² Yet certain occupations were at a disadvantage. Werth noticed the difference between his solitude and the distractions of the farmers working in Saint-Amour: "*Je suis tout seul avec la guerre. Ce qui du monde extérieur vient jusqu'à moi n'est que la guerre ou dépend de la guerre. Les paysans du moins continuent de soigner leurs bêtes, arrachent des*

⁹ Mauriac, *Œuvres complètes*, p.331. (Paris, 1942)

¹⁰ Werth, *Déposition*, p.253. (5.11.41)

¹¹ See Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*, pp.289-293, for how the perception of factory workers sent to Germany changed over the course of the period.

¹² Moret, *Journal d'une mauvaise Française*, p.187. (1.9.42)

pommes de terre."¹³ The peasants still had their work to keep their minds from dwelling on the defeat, and no one could blame them for continuing their work. The German military presence in France did not change the fact that the stock still had to be managed and crops still had to be harvested. The same could not be said for the artists who worked in Paris, whose work was not always regarded as essential everyday practice.

The problem for these diarists was that it was impossible to continue living as one had done before because the German presence and the new Vichy regime had brought in a new element into the equation with respect to work: namely whether one was betraying one's country by collaborating with the enemy. This was collaboration not in the original sense of the armistice terms but what it would come to mean for the French people: collusion with the enemy. The diarist Duméril, who worked as a translator in the Nantes administration, believed that the only option was: "*Attendre, c'est la seule chose à faire, et faire son travail au jour le jour.*"¹⁴ Some, however, would break free from this resignation, believing that it was unpatriotic. That is not to say Duméril was unpatriotic. Like the title of his diary, he was indeed *un honnête homme*. Yet absent from his attitude is the possibility that continuing one's work might be perceived as betraying France. When a gentleman approached him to ask him to *devenir adhérent de «Collaboration»* his reply was simply: "*Pas le temps de m'en occuper, et neutralité absolue de ma part.*"¹⁵ The problem was, however, whenever there was a question of interaction with the Germans, one simply could not remain neutral; one had to choose which side one was on. This may well have been less relevant in the context of the Occupation but in the context of the Liberation and the purge that followed, everyone's behaviour during the Occupation would be scrutinised. What one had chosen to do could bring serious consequences later on. Galtier-Boissière was aware that some had been too hasty in their decision-making:

*Dumaine me dit: «Il y a des gens qui ont cru fin juin 40 que Londres serait occupé 15 jours après et ils ont pris position. Aujourd'hui ils s'accrochent à la collaboration parce que si les fridolins sont battus, ils sont sûrs d'être fusillés ou pendus.»*¹⁶

The overwhelming majority were far more hesitant in that they chose to neither actively collaborate nor resist. Yet this does not mean that they had not made

¹³ Werth, *Déposition*, p.47. (26.9.40)

¹⁴ Duméril, *Journal d'un honnête homme pendant l'occupation*, p.120.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.129. (9.3.41)

¹⁶ Galtier-Boissière, *Journal*, p.50. (25.7.41)

a choice but, rather, that they had not gone too far in their choices. The diarist Toesca, who had a subtle but significant difference in opinion to that of Duméril, was more aware of the situation when he listed his aims as a bureaucrat in Paris:

*Je précise ma position; quel que soit le poste auquel on est appelé en ce moment: 1) apporter un soulagement aux misères humaines; 2) essayer de convaincre les Français qu'ils ne peuvent rien faire de pire que de se battre entre eux; 3) d'autre part, je refuse de suivre aveuglement les ordres. Je ne veux rien entreprendre que je ne l'approuve en conscience.*¹⁷

One must never discount that Toesca was playing to his reader but from the reading of his diary, there is a clear difference in opinion to that of Duméril in that he was always clear that he was working for the best interests of France, whether they coincided with German wishes or not. Duméril, on the other hand, was convinced that there were enough decent Germans to ensure that working with them was the best chance of making the Occupation run as smoothly as possible. There was no suggestion of duping the Germans as with Toesca.¹⁸ Moreover, it was not only working with the Germans where the French had to examine their conscience. Rist was asked to be the Vichy ambassador in the United States but eventually turned down the offer as he could not be sure of the designs of Vichy with respect to the Americans.¹⁹ Drieu, who was editor of the *Nouvelle Revue française* (NRF), which was supervised closely by the Germans, was asked to work for Vichy:

*On me propose d'entrer dans l'appareil de Vichy (pour y organiser la surveillance de la littérature!). Mais puis-je servir directement le Gouvernement de Vichy, si conservateur, si réactionnaire?... Resterai-je un Français en l'air? Comme tant d'autres. Je sers la France en individu, dans le cadre d'une situation purement personnelle. Mal vu des Gaullistes, des attentistes, de la plupart des collaborationnistes. Éternelle histoire du littéraire, quand il a le moyen d'être indépendant.*²⁰

It seems strange that someone who was working under close German supervision should be concerned about betraying France by working for Vichy. The implication is that working for Vichy would be far more dishonourable than working for the Germans.

Those who worked in the Occupied Zone were effectively only concerned with the Germans. Galtier-Boissière noted the seemingly flippant remark: "*Comment sera gagnée la guerre? «Par l'or américain, la ténacité anglaise... et la comédie*

¹⁷ Toesca, *Cinq ans de patience*, pp.116-117. (17.6.42)

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.82 *La politique actuelle consiste à amadouer les Allemands le plus possible, à les détourner des exactions qu'ils sont prêts à commettre.* (25.8.40)

¹⁹ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.186. (13.9.41)

²⁰ Drieu, *Journal*, p.272. (21.9.41)

française.»²¹ In France there is a saying: *tout commence et finit par des chansons*. Was it not best to promote French culture in an otherwise oppressive German world or was this simply helping, intentionally or not, the German cause by distracting the French from the harsh realities of the Occupation? After the Liberation, the argument was bandied about that all the French plays, films and books that appeared during the Occupation years were in defiance of the Germans, who were intent on destroying all cultures other than their own. Burrin points out, however, that the German policy of promoting and encouraging French culture was a very liberal one and went against the strict guidelines adhered to back in the Reich. Moreover, such a liberal policy had many benefits for Germany: it made order easier to maintain by distracting the French population; it encouraged the idea of collaboration by promoting the belief that the French had a cultural role to play in a Nazi Europe. It also made a contrast between the harsh restrictions imposed in the so-called *zone libre* and the ostensibly tolerant Occupiers. They were keen to create the illusion that one could continue working normally as one had done before the war.²²

The artists working in Paris were not helped by the fact that they often maintained a high profile, which would cause much resentment after the Liberation. It was hard for many to accept that people could continue to enjoy success, notoriety and seemingly such familiarity with the Germans in a time of such suffering and repression. On August 23, 1944, Sacha Guitry was arrested and put in prison for alleged crimes of collaboration but would be released two years later, having been found not guilty of the charges laid against him. His motivation for writing his postwar memoirs, *Quatre ans d'occupations*, was essentially to prove his innocence. The title is most appropriate as within the broad framework of the Occupation, Guitry was lost in his own world of work. For him, the two remained separate: he may have lived under the Occupation but in his eyes he did not work under the Occupation. He always maintained that despite the German presence in France, this did not extend, in his eyes, to his work. His work was something which the Germans could never take away from him. Furthermore, his work was not merely a means of expressing himself but also himself as a Frenchman. Guitry was no Germanophile, unlike Duméril, and could not even speak German to Jünger when he met him in person. Pétain would

²¹ Galtier-Boissière, *Journal*, p.136. (26.1.43)

²² Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*, pp.329-330.

maintain that his presence in France acted as a shield for the French. Guitry would go further to say that his work during the Occupation acted as a sword:

*Car, encore une fois, si des Français furent étonnés de me savoir en plein Paris dès l'an 40 – je sais des Allemands qui en étaient encore bien plus étonnés qu'eux. A cet égard, on me dira: – Mais comment se fait-il que vous ayez pu jouer devant eux pendant quatre ans de suite, vous qui dites si bien, et qui prouvez d'ailleurs, que vous ne les aimez pas? Je répondrai: – Parce que ce n'était pas le moment de penser à ses préférences et de s'occuper de ses opinions. Je m'étais fourré dans la tête l'idée que ma présence à Paris pouvait dans une certaine mesure servir la France, et je lui faisais allégrement le sacrifice de mes goûts.*²³

One may well question his sincerity but the question he raises is still pertinent. To return to Mauriac's image, Guitry was well aware of the temptation to stop 'playing ball' but he believed that to do so was to renounce the only positive course of action.²⁴

French History has shown France's ability to endure catastrophes and rise above them. De Gaulle noted in his memoirs: "*Vieille France, accablée d'Histoire, meurtrie de guerres et de révolutions, allant et venant sans relâche de la grandeur au déclin, mais redressée, de siècle en siècle, par le génie du nouveau.*"²⁵ Even in France's darkest hours great work could still be achieved. Guitry believed that there were only two things left for him to admire in his beloved country: the glorious history of France and the Arts.²⁶ Some of the masterpieces of Manet, Renoir and Monet were painted during the years 1870-1871, when the north of France was occupied by the Germans. Guitry took this to mean that

rien ne peut abattre le Génie de la France [...] Voilà ce que faisaient des hommes de génie à l'heure où la France venait de perdre la guerre. Et devant ces merveilles, n'a-t-on pas l'impression que ce que l'on perdait d'un côté, on le regagnait de l'autre? Car on a bien le droit de considérer que des œuvres pareilles, cela tient lieu de victoires. Passons maintenant dans la salle voisine. Vois donc: Matisse, Bonnard, Dunoyer de Segonzac, Othon

²³ Guitry, *Quatre ans d'occupations*, p.95. See also pp.394-395. Goethe's presence at Erfurt before Napoleon was a comfort to the German people. Guitry believed, similarly: *il devait mettre son prestige, quelque faible qu'il fût, au service de la France.*

²⁴ Jackson, *The dark years*, pp.302-303. The post-war reputations of artists did not always reflect a balanced assessment of their conduct during the Occupation. Paul Claudel, who wrote an 'Ode to Pétain' in 1940 and another one to de Gaulle in 1944, would be unfairly singled out for his initial admiration for Pétain. There is the contrasting example of Edith Thomas, who claimed that she refused to publish anything during the Occupation but this 'choice' was helped by Gallimard's rejection of her manuscript in 1942.

²⁵ Gaulle, Charles de, *Mémoires de guerre*, (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), p.5.

²⁶ Desanti, Dominique, *Sacha Guitry: cinquante ans de spectacle*, Chapter Five in *Quatre ans d'occupations*, p.249.

*Friez, Maillol, Utrillo, Wlaminck, Despiaux, Touchagues, Brianchon – la France continue.*²⁷

The Germans may have occupied French soil but they could not take away her past and they could not take away French culture or, at least, they should not be allowed to do so.

Guitry would have us believe that his plays were a means of expressing himself as a Frenchman. Aristide Maillol, arguably the finest sculptor in the world at that time, agreed to leave his Mediterranean retreat to open the exposition of Arno Breker at the Tuileries in April, 1942. Guitry believed that there were two ways this could be taken. Firstly, it could be interpreted that Maillol came to Paris at the behest of the Germans and “*s’est vautré devant les Occupants*” for which he should have been “*frappé d’Indignité Nationale*”. Secondly, it could be interpreted that Breker summoned his “*maître vénéré*” and received Maillol as one would receive royalty. Breker would be the one bowing to Maillol:

*et à cette minute là, c’est l’Allemagne qui s’incline devant le génie de la France – et la France n’est pas vaincue à cette minute-là – et loin de se vautrer devant les Occupants, M. Maillol est alors le symbole vivant de la France immortelle – il prouve une fois de plus que Paris, militairement occupé, conserve néanmoins tout son rayonnement et continue d’être «l’enclume des renommés» - selon l’expression si belle de Hugo.*²⁸

The former opinion might well be seen more in the light of the post-Liberation examination of the behaviour of the French during the Occupation. The latter view might bear more weight in the context of the Occupation: France had been defeated and was trying to rebuild herself. The Arts were a means of conveying not only to the French but also to the Germans that France still lived on. The German occupation force could not be stopped but one could help to stand up to the German cultural invasion.

One could be cynical and believe that Guitry was merely protecting his own interests and paid little attention to the interests of France. Yet when one looks at it from the other perspective, the situation appears to be much more complex. Whether one believes Guitry or not, his argument does make sense. The problem was, however, that he had no appreciation that his seemingly patriotic actions could be perceived as collusion with the enemy:

²⁷ Guitry, *Quatre ans d’occupations*, pp.415-416.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.384-385.

*Dès lors, on avouera que j'ai vraiment de la malchance: quand je me refuse à jouer devant les Allemands, mon geste est «politique» et je dessers la France – quand je joue devant eux, je trahis mon pays!*²⁹

His attitude was very much in tune with that of Cocteau: “*La radio anglaise m'accuse de «collaborer». La presse franco-allemande m'accuse d'être gaulliste. Voilà ce qui arrive aux esprits libres qui refusent de se mêler de politique et n'y comprennent rien.*”³⁰ The two were very similar in that neither of them had any notion of politics. Gheusi, director of the Opera, wrote in his memoirs of Guitry: “*Il ignore la politique et n'a pas la ressource de lui attribuer les événements.*”³¹ Cocteau and Guitry were so involved in their own artistic worlds that they were unable to realise that their actions could offend some people. A good example is the infamous newspaper article that Cocteau wrote about the German sculptor Arno Breker:

*Je vous salue Breker. Je vous salue de la haute patrie des poètes, patrie où les patries n'existent pas, sauf dans la mesure où chacun y apporte le trésor du travail national. Je vous salue... parce que dans la haute patrie où nous sommes compatriotes, vous me parlez de la France.*³²

Cocteau simply meant to say that he admired Breker as a sculptor rather than as a German but he could not appreciate that at a time when Germany had a stranglehold on France that such a tribute to a German could have an adverse reaction on the French public. Cocteau often dined with and met German officers such as Jünger but, in his eyes, their similar interests transgressed national boundaries.³³ He admired the words of Stendhal written during the Restoration: “*Rien de ce qu'on fait ici ne peut me toucher, écrivait Stendhal; je suis passager sur le vaisseau. L'essentiel est qu'on ait de la tranquillité et de bons spectacles.*”³⁴ It appears very naïve on Cocteau's behalf that he could simply opt out of the Occupation and carry on as before without attracting criticism: “*Dujardin m'écrit ce soir: «Vous n'êtes pas venu à notre séance, aux Mathurins. Vous ne lisez donc pas les journaux?» Non je ne les lis pas. Et comment ferais-je pour les lire! Mon époque n'est pas celle dont ils parlent. Mon époque n'est pas la leur.*”³⁵ One is struck when reading the diary of

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.86.

³⁰ Cocteau, *Journal*, p.372. (1.10.43)

³¹ Desanti, *Sacha Guitry: cinquante ans de spectacle*, p.248. See also Cocteau, *Journal*, p.91. (19.4.42)

³² Cocteau, *Journal*, p.133. (23.5.42) See p.128. Cocteau was greatly encouraged by Hitler's words to Breker that he intended to come to Paris with artists rather than generals. (18.5.42)

³³ *Ibid.*, p.31. (12.3.42)

³⁴ Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*, pp.340-341 This was taken from Roger Vailland, who was initially a firm believer in 1940 of Franco-German collaboration but would later come to join the Resistance.

³⁵ Cocteau, *Journal*, p.71. (4-5.4.42)

Cocteau how little the Occupation appears to have encroached on his life: “*Arrivée de Léonce Rosenberg et naturellement on reparle de l’époque. Grande fatigue. Léonce me dit: «Vous ne changez pas.» Je lui répons: «Je suis trop distrait pour changer.»*”³⁶ He could not understand why the public vilified artists, who were maintaining the *grandeur* of France but it was not so much the fact that Cocteau continued to work that irked so many people but, rather, that he outwardly behaved as though there was no German Occupation. It is this acceptance of defeat, coupled with his stubborn determination to carry on with his life, that drew so much criticism. Yet there seems to be a fine line between the attitude of Cocteau and that of Duméril. The only difference was that Cocteau was in the public eye. His work, therefore, had more far-reaching significance.

The question is could anything positive come out of the Occupation or were the French, to use Guéhenno’s image, confined within the prison walls? Hoffmann raises the question how much of *les années noires* was a period of decline and how much of the post-liberation years was a period of renewal?³⁷ What, in short, was the legacy of the Vichy period? What indictment of the French during those years prevents any positive reflection? What cannot be denied is that the Arts flourished during the Occupation, which suggests that the French refused to renounce themselves to their fate and continued to *jouer à la balle*.³⁸ Moreover, it suggests that there was a voracious appetite for something that was able to distract the French from the harsh realities of the Occupation. Werth would be especially critical of the tendency to block out the war. Yet perhaps in his rural world of Saint-Amour, where he was unable to go to the theatre, he was perhaps not in the best position to comment on the impact the theatre and cinema had on the Parisian population. In a city where there were German signs on almost every corner, here was an opportunity to be exposed to a uniquely French environment: French actors, French issues and, perhaps most importantly, the French language. This notion of malleability was not just confined to the artists working in Paris but applied to every French individual, and would continue to be examined by the diarists throughout the Occupation.³⁹

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.53. (23.5.42) Rosenberg was a famous art dealer.

³⁷ Hoffmann, *Essais sur la France*, p.9.

³⁸ See Jackson, *The dark years*, pp.310-318. Cinema audiences, for example, had never been larger. There were 220 million cinema goers in 1938, 225 million in 1941 and over 300 million in 1943.

³⁹ This will be further discussed in the following section.

Returning to one's work in general terms was part of this process but the Arts were a means of making this transition easier.

These artists were in the majority but there were writers, such as Guéhenno and Mauriac, who believed that it was totally inappropriate to produce any piece of work in times of such repression. Although he published *La Pharisienne* in 1941, Mauriac chose not to publish anything else during the Occupation. In 1942, he wrote in the *Gazette de Lausanne*:

*De toutes les épreuves que subit aujourd'hui un écrivain français, il n'en est aucune qu'il devrait accueillir de meilleur cœur que celle du silence. L'homme dont c'était le métier que d'exprimer en toute rencontre son opinion, est invité à se taire, - non certes à ne plus juger, mais à garder pour lui son jugement, à le réviser à loisir dans cette longue retraite du malheur.*⁴⁰

Instead Mauriac chose to write clandestinely and actively became involved with the literary resistance. This suggests a definite change in attitude from his earlier stance of continuing to *jouer à la balle*. The notion of silence is an interesting concept. Silence could be used as a powerful weapon and, moreover, was often the only weapon available to the French. Arguably the most famous underground publication was Vercor's *Le silence de la mer*, which centred on the sea of silence between a young girl, who could be seen as representing France, and a very polite German officer, who could be equally seen as representing the courteous and correct Germans of the summer of 1940. The young girl refuses to speak at all to the German officer despite his charming manner and his assurances that Germany and France will come together in peace. Her stand is vindicated when the German officer reveals that he has been fooled all along as Germany intends to destroy France and her culture. Guéhenno was another, who had no time for those who continued to work in the field of literature. Their excuse that they must continue to write for the good of French literature did not hold with him, as no one was indispensable in his eyes.

Guéhenno firmly believed that the Occupation effectively meant that every individual was in prison and that the only honourable thing to do was to "*peindre les murs de sa prison*."⁴¹ He had no time for writers, who chose to go outside the prison walls and talk about subjects that did not deal with the Occupation, as that was the only problem, in his eyes, that was on the minds of the French public. He also had nothing but contempt for those who willingly served the German cause by spreading

⁴⁰ Jackson, *The dark years*, p.335.

⁴¹ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, pp.72-74. (30.11.40)

their propaganda.⁴² Burrin argues that Guéhenno's philosophy was far too demanding for the overwhelming majority of authors and academics, who believed that the publication of a book did not have to recognise the Occupier nor the politics of the Occupier.⁴³ Silence was, for the majority, impossible as they had to make a living somehow. Those, like Guéhenno, who refused to publish anything under the German Occupation, could afford to, as he had his teaching job to fall back on. Cocteau would similarly make the point against Mauriac at the end of the war in response to Mauriac's criticism:

*André Dubois me rapporte que François Mauriac est très monté contre moi. Il trouve que je n'ai pas opté politiquement et me reproche mon article sur Breker. Ceci est encore de la bile et il ferait mieux de se souvenir, comme moi, de notre amitié si grande et si ancienne... Moi, on m'a ruiné avec l'affaire des Parents terribles, on m'a frappé et blessé l'œil, etc. Mauriac est riche. Il peut vivre. Il faut que je gagne ma vie.*⁴⁴

Yet Guéhenno was right to distinguish between those writers who wrote for themselves and those writers who wrote essentially for the Germans. Those who wrote for the newspapers fall into the latter category but there were also authors such as Jacques Chardonne, who openly supported collaboration with Germany. His infamous work, *L'été à la Maurie*, which he would be punished for after the Liberation, was an ill-advised eulogy of German culture in a time where the French felt vulnerable to the all-conquering Germans. It is a story of a vineyard owner who offers willingly a glass of cognac to a German officer as a sign of his esteem and respect for Germany. The message is unmistakable: France is willingly offering itself to Germany as a partner.

Like so many aspects of the Occupation, the problem is not so much with the people who fall into black-and-white categories of resistance or collaboration but, rather, with the people who fall into the overwhelmingly larger grey area. The likes of Vercors and Chardonne fall into the categories of black and white but in between is the much larger grey area, which incorporated all those who felt that they were justified in their actions but who appeared after the Liberation in a much less favourable light. De Beauvoir is an example of someone who is far more difficult to judge. She could not help but have sympathy for Cocteau's attitude while at the same time disapproving of it:

⁴² Ibid., pp.74-75. (30.11.40) See also Werth, *Déposition*, p.484. (5.6.43)

⁴³ Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*, p.338.

⁴⁴ Cocteau, *Journal*, p.498. (5.4.44)

Il disait que le Poète doit se garder du siècle, rester indifférent aux folies de la guerre et de la politique. «Ils nous embêtent, disait-il. Tous: les Allemands... les Américains... ils nous embêtent.» Nous n'étions pas du tout d'accord, mais nous avions de la sympathie pour lui; nous goûtions sa présence insolite dans cette nuit balafrée de rayons vert espérance.⁴⁵

The implication is that the idea in theory was sound but it did not work in the reality of the Occupation. She clearly stated that there was an unwritten rule amongst artists:

On ne devait pas écrire dans les journaux et les revues de zone occupée, ni parler à Radio-Paris; on pouvait travailler dans la presse de la zone libre et à Radio-Vichy: tout dépendait du sens des articles et des émissions. Publier un livre de l'autre côté de la ligne était parfaitement licite; ici, la question se posait; finalement on estima que là aussi, c'était le contenu de l'ouvrage qui comptait.⁴⁶

Yet she later contradicted that statement with the following claim:

Le seul problème, c'était de gagner ma vie. Je ne sais par quel truchement j'obtins une situation de «metteuse en ondes» à la radio nationale; j'ai dit que, d'après notre code, on avait le droit d'y travailler: tout dépendait de ce qu'on y faisait.⁴⁷

After having earlier stated that her moral position was such that one had to consider what one did before taking it up, she maintained that survival was the only concern, which was her way of justifying work for *Radio Paris (qui ment et qui est allemand)*.

This did not prevent her, however, at showing contempt for the following:

je condamnais tous les collaborateurs; mais à l'égard des gens de mon espèce, intellectuels, journalistes, écrivains, j'éprouvais un dégoût intime, précis, douloureux. Quand des littérateurs, des peintres allaient en Allemagne assurer les vainqueurs de notre adhésion spirituelle, je me sentais personnellement trahie. Je considérais les articles de Déat, de Brasillach, leurs dénonciations, leurs appels au meurtre, comme des crimes aussi impardonnables que les activités d'un Darlan.⁴⁸

There was never any suggestion that she might figure among these artists who had betrayed France.

This, at base, was the moral malleability that Werth⁴⁹ and Mauriac could not condone. It would be unfair to put De Beauvoir and Sartre in the same camp as Chardonne but at the same time their actions were questionable when someone of their standing could help add weight to the German cause, however small or unintentional their contribution might be. Guitry's argument was if people like him

⁴⁵ De Beauvoir, *La force de l'âge*, p.600.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.528.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.554-555.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.515-516.

⁴⁹ Werth, *Déposition*, pp.247-248. (13.10.41)

had refused to work under the German Occupation, the Parisian population would have been more exposed to German films and plays. The problem was that all these arguments make good points and, indeed, the complex nature of the situation, makes them all effectively valid points. The film, *Le Corbeau*, was attacked by all sides, including the Germans, because it offered no simple answers. It contains a scene, which admirably portrays the ambiguity and complexity of the Occupation. A seemingly respectable psychiatrist, who in the end turns out to be the Crow, gives a lesson on morality to a doctor:

"You think that all people are good or evil [*he grasps a hanging light which casts a pool of light in the otherwise dark room*]. But where is darkness? [*he pushes the lamp and it begins to swing*], where is light? Where is the border of evil? [*The lamp illuminates different parts of the room as it swings*]... Since a whirlwind of hate and denunciation has blown throughout this town all moral values are more or less corrupted. You have been affected like the others. One only has choices you know."⁵⁰

During the Occupation darkness and light could be said to represent the black and white notions of collaboration and resistance. The majority of the French population, however, represented the constantly shifting area where those two notions met. The choices they made never clearly cast them into light or darkness but nor could it be said that they remained fully outside of either of these two notions at any one time. The influential image of the French as passive victims has to be set against ample opportunities for profit and pleasure that many were only too ready to take. The Germans took many French people on as employees, many businesses were offered contracts to supply the German military and informal opportunities began to abound on the black market. Just as administrators tried to define what was legal in terms of private relations between the French and Germans, so too did French communities fix the bounds of what was morally acceptable. The problem was that how morality was defined collectively by the French during the Occupation was often not the same as how it was defined after the Liberation.⁵¹ Jünger did not approve of a young woman's job to attract and take clients to a club but he did acknowledge: "*Il faut pourtant nourrir la mère qui est malade, et autres soins de ce genre.*"⁵² One had to survive above all, even if it meant compromising one's principles.

⁵⁰ Jackson, *The dark years*, p.326.

⁵¹ Gildea, *Marianne in chains*, pp.14.15.

⁵² Jünger, *Premier Journal Parisien*, p.29.

Paris: a city of defiance or acquiescence?

In the course of its long history, Paris had experienced many sieges but it had very rarely experienced defeat or occupation. The 19th century saw Paris, for the first time in 1814 and then in 1871, occupied by foreign forces. However traumatic these occupations had been, they only lasted a short amount of time. The occupation of 1940 would last a matter of years and not months or days. It was not so much the problem of coming to terms with defeat but coming to terms with the presence of the enemy for such a prolonged time. There was a fine line between continuing one's life and being too resigned to the defeat. The diarists based in Paris had to come to terms with the German military presence right from the outset of the Occupation. Paris may well have had special qualities that were not noted by diarists living elsewhere in France but ultimately its people were, nevertheless, representative of the French people as a whole. It is necessary to first examine those special qualities before examining the wider aspects of the behaviour of the Parisian people. Whilst the particular charms of Paris may well have been unique to Paris, the recording of those special qualities can be seen in a more general sense as a means of combating the German presence. It is not necessarily what the diarists observed that is significant but, rather, the fact that what they chose to record made an impact on their behaviour. The leitmotiv of the *pêcheurs à la ligne* or the extravagant hats worn by Parisian women appear countless times in the diaries of those living in Paris. They were a symbol of French defiance and represented a refusal to allow the Occupation to grind the Parisian population down. These diarists, more often than not of privileged means, were aware of the problems of food and fuel shortages, and how those problems particularly affected the poorer sections of Paris society. Yet their tendency to accentuate the positive aspects of the Occupation is a representation of the determination of the French people, as a whole, to get through the Occupation. At the same time, however, it is an indication that those who were more disposed to cope with the harsher aspects of the Occupation could more afford to appreciate the positive aspects.

What is noticeable when reading the diaries of those living in Paris is that the city gave off a special aura that is not present in the diaries of those living elsewhere in France. Toesca put it succinctly: "*A Paris, toutes choses baignent dans une lumière*

différente."⁵³ This was true in a literal sense as well as a figurative sense. During the Occupation, lighting was prohibited at night, and, furthermore, only the Germans and those with special permission could use automobiles. This helped to create the impression of living in a primeval Paris where the simple pleasures of life were not yet engulfed by the frenetic pressures of the modern day:

*La ville est si calme qu'on entend les grillons au pied des immeubles, dans les sous-sols des boutiques, et que les hulottes ou les chouettes appellent toute la nuit dans les arbres des squares. Paris ne s'occupait pas, naguère, des phases de la lune. A présent, les «silences amis» de cet astre sont des bénédictions: l'architecture des rues, la ligne des perspectives se montrent dans une nouvelle atmosphère de calme et de beauté. Et de plus on peut circuler sans se casser la figure au coin des trottoirs. Nos successeurs n'auront pas idée de ce Paris de conte de fées, de cette ville au bois dormant qu'aura enchantée un moment le Démon de la guerre.*⁵⁴

There is the curious contradiction that Paris owed its silence and natural lighting to the Germans but at the same time there was a dismissal of their presence in Paris.

Paris may well have no longer been the capital of France but it still remained the cultural capital of France. For all the criticism laid against Cocteau, he embodied Paris' defiance of the Occupation in that he continued with his work as he had done before the Occupation. Yet it was not just his work that determined his behaviour:

*Beauté prodigieuse de Paris en 1942. Les sirènes. La foule qui profite des alertes pour déambuler dans les ténèbres. Une fenêtre rouge. La Comédie-Française complètement illuminée. Les Allemands qui découvrent des France les unes sous les autres et déchiffrent des énigmes. Les voyageurs qui arrivent de zone libre, stupéfaits par la ville comme des vieilles dames de province en exil avec la cour. Les restaurants où se vend tout ce qui ne doit pas se vendre, malgré les punitions, les amendes, les fermetures. Les danses clandestines, les orchestres dans des caves, les insultes de la presse, les théâtres qui regorgent de monde, les jeunes acteurs qui émergent, les vieilles tragédiennes qui rejouent, la jeunesse qui grouille et qui nous donne à lire pièce sur pièce. Jean Marie poursuivi dans les rues par des grappes de jeunes filles qui veulent des autographes. Le soir, je longe la queue interminable qui attend le spectacle de la Comédie-Française. J'entre dans le Palais-Royal et de cour en cour, de colonnade en colonnade, je rentre chez moi, dans la ville interdite, la ville chinoise, la ville italienne, la Padoue, la Venise, le Hong-Kong des joueurs de Balzac.*⁵⁵

It was as if the city itself was resisting the German Occupation, which, in turn, gave the people an air of indifference to the Germans. The air of rebellion was symbolised by the restaurants defying Vichy food restrictions or the throngs attending plays. It is

⁵³ Toesca, *Cinq ans de patience*, p.120. (25.6.42)

⁵⁴ Thérive, *L'envers du décor*, p.121. (May 1942)

⁵⁵ Cocteau, *Journal*, pp.34-35. (13.3.42)

significant to note that Vichy had prohibited organised dances. It took the view that France was in mourning after its defeat and that so long as families were deprived of their loved ones in prisoner-of-war camps or German factories, there should be no cause for merry-making.⁵⁶

Of course, the Germans were only too keen to promote the idea that life should continue as normal, and that this should compare favourably with the infinitely more austere life in the Unoccupied Zone. This would explain the stupefied looks Cocteau observed on the faces of those who had come from the so-called *zone libre*. In such an environment, it was easy to ignore the German Occupation and remain light-hearted. It was one thing, however, for the Germans to encourage such an environment but the desire to escape from the realities of the Occupation ultimately came from the French. Bobkowski recalled a night where a film was interrupted by a bombing raid. Such an event might have dampened spirits but he observed that everyone left in high spirits: “*Les rues, argentées par le clair de la lune, étaient calmes et silencieuses. Une nuit idéale pour l’amour et les bombardements. Demain, nous irons voir la suite. Dites-moi si la vie ne vaut pas la peine d’être vécue!*”⁵⁷ The Occupation had seemingly returned Paris to a simpler time where one had the time to appreciate its splendour. Yet one could just as easily focus on the negative aspects of occupied Paris: the curfew, the food and fuel restrictions or the German military presence. There was instead a determined effort to emphasise the positive aspects of life in occupied Paris: “*Ce désert parisien des dimanches parisiens! Qui n’aura pas connu avec nous cette époque n’aura rien appris du goût profond des hommes pour cette sorte de simplicité.*”⁵⁸

Even the Germans could not help but be impressed by Paris. Even before the Russian front was opened up, France was seen as a land of plenty. *Leben wie Gott in Frankreich* was a phrase much used by the Germans to sum up the ease of life in France.⁵⁹ The German soldiers were often more like tourists than enforcers of the peace. Jünger was evidently captivated by the city:

vivre à Paris m’aide à me maintenir plus que ne le feraient mes occupations habituelles. Et il est bien possible, en effet, qu’il se cache pour moi dans

⁵⁶ Gildea, *Marianne in chains*, pp.134-135.

⁵⁷ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.318. (26.3.42)

⁵⁸ Deharme, *Les années perdues*, pp.80-81. (11.5.41) See also p.84: *La vie reprend un sens primitif; on se sert à nouveau de ses mains, de ses pieds, de son esprit d’invention... On retrouve ce qui ne se livre que dans le calme, la profondeur, et les lentes promenades éblouies.* (31.7.41)

⁵⁹ Gildea, *Marianne in chains*, p.71.

*cette ville non seulement des dons particuliers, mais aussi des sources de travail et d'activité efficace. Elle est toujours, et dans un sens presque plus essentiel encore que naguère, la capitale, symbole et citadelle d'un grand style de vie transmis par les siècles, et aussi de ces idées qui rallient toutes les intelligences, et qui de nos jours, font défaut précisément aux nations. Peut-être ferais-je bien de mettre à profit d'abord la possibilité de prendre pied ici. Elle s'est offerte à moi sans que j'y fusse pour rien.*⁶⁰

Paris had retained a certain magical charm that could not be affected by the swastika flag flying from the Eiffel Tower or the German signs that found themselves on nearly every street corner. This, in turn, seemed to rub off on the Parisian population:

*Comme les Allemands doivent être étonnés de ce Paris du printemps, de cette bonne grâce, de ces fleurs, de ces chapeaux de femmes, de ces petits carrosses traînés par des couples de cyclistes, par l'incroyable force de résistance de l'air! Paris digère tout et n'assimile rien. Les grandes pancartes allemandes des Champs-Élysées, on les sent là comme les ciseaux dans l'estomac de l'autruche. Aucune importance. Un spectacle de légèreté profonde qui dépasse de beaucoup ce qu'on lui reproche – qui est un héroïsme, une vertu.*⁶¹

Such behaviour was encouraged by the fact that the Germans did not seek to impose themselves on Paris. There were certainly forces working for the interests of Germany, such as the collaborationist press, but the spirit of Paris was by no means extinguished by the German presence.

The Parisians felt sufficiently confident to display their indifference to the Germans in their outward behaviour. Many diarists observed the extravagant hats many Parisian women wore:

*Maintenant, on n'a qu'un ticket de viande par semaine. Les feuilles des marronniers deviennent appétissantes. Les asperges coûtent vingt francs la botte, une sardine au vinaigre trois francs cinquante, il n'y a pas de vin, pas d'œufs, pas de poisson, et extrêmement peu d'amour dans l'air. Jamais les femmes n'ont été plus belles sous leurs chapeaux de chiens savants écrasés de tulle, de fleurs, d'oiseaux et de fruits. Les petits souliers de bois à empeigne de paille n'ont pas encore trouvé leur forme définitive.*⁶²

Such extravagance may appear absurd when many felt great hardship but they were seen as a kind of antidote to the Occupation. They were a symbol of the Parisians' determination not to let the Occupation grind them down into despair. In a time where resources were becoming scarcer and more expensive, here was a symbol of French enterprise and creativity which could shine through even in such dark times.

⁶⁰ Jünger, *Premier journal parisien*, pp.33-34. (30.5.41)

⁶¹ Cocteau, *Journal*, pp.112-114. (6.5.42)

⁶² Deharme, *Les années perdues*, pp.77-78. (25.4.41) See also p.130. (18.11.42) Thérive, *L'envers du décor*, p.75. (11.5.41) Cocteau, *Journal*, p.200. (11.9.42)

Moreover, such things were extremely personalised. Meat and chestnut trees, fish and love belong to quite distinct orders, and each individual would have different ways of coping with the Occupation. The smallest things could make a significant difference:

*Ne pas voir seulement le côté puéril de la chose: il se crée une ambiance favorable à toutes les entreprises, mêmes les ridicules, les absurdes, les folles, les désespérées. Dans un tel bouillon de culture tout est possible.*⁶³

After an appeal on English radio in 1941, French authorities were busy everywhere getting rid of V signs, adopted by the British as a sign for victory.⁶⁴ Many diarists, particularly Galtier-Boissière, recorded examples of *petites histoires*, such as jokes or graffiti written in toilets.⁶⁵ Guéhenno was heartened by the Parisian's patriotic efforts, at a simple level, where the dressing in the national colours gave a sense of fraternity and was a means of preventing resignation to defeat.⁶⁶ Where people had few means at their disposal and where active resistance was perceived as unnecessary provocation of the dominant Germans, here was something in which everyone could get involved. Drieu, however, believed that this was a sign of decadence in that the French were only capable of a *petit patriotisme*:

*Les Français ne sont plus capables de patriotisme généreux, créateur, offensif, mais ils sont encore capables de patriotisme passif – comme les Italiens du XVIIIe devant les Autrichiens. Un patriotisme de ricanements, de bons mots, de petits complots – un patriotisme de mort.*⁶⁷

Yet Bobkowski recalled how one beautiful Sunday morning he awoke to the familiar sounds of the radio playing Liszt, Chopin and Ravel. The repetition of such simple things gave an illusion of continuity but also, more importantly a “*sentiment de «paix malgré tout»*”.⁶⁸ It was important to think that one could still not be affected by the Occupation.

The notion of malleability in the face of adversity continued to be explored by the diarists throughout the Occupation, and not just by those living in Paris. Gide, for example, took comfort in the passages from de Montesequieu's *Cahiers*:

Une des choses que l'on doit remarquer en France, c'est l'extrême facilité avec laquelle elle s'est toujours remises de ses pertes, de ses maladies, de ses dépopulations, et avec quelle ressource elle a toujours soutenu ou même surmonté les vices intérieurs de ses divers gouvernements. Peut-être en doit-

⁶³ Toesca, *Cinq ans de patience*, p.129. (23.7.42)

⁶⁴ Duméril, *Journal d'un honnête homme pendant l'occupation*, p.116.

⁶⁵ Werth, *Déposition*, p.354. (4.10.42) Pétain est un vendu written in a toilet.

⁶⁶ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, pp.165-166. (23.7.41) See also Jünger, *Premier journal parisien*, p.23. (3.5.41)

⁶⁷ Drieu, *Journal*, pp.273-274. (23.9.41)

⁶⁸ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.339. (28.6.42)

*elle la cause à cette diversité même, qui a fait que nul mal n'a jamais pu prendre assez de racine pour lui ôter entièrement le fruit de ses avantages naturels.*⁶⁹

The opinion of Bobkowski lay somewhere in the middle. He was often frustrated with the behaviour of the French, as it often did not live up to his high expectations. Yet every so often he would reflect and remark that one ultimately had to admire their behaviour, even though at times it frustrated and disappointed him:

*Je regarde les gens se promener, pêcher à la ligne. Ici, tout est en harmonie avec soi-même, les gens n'ont ni problèmes ni complexes, ils n'ont pas envie de décrocher la lune. La vie est eux, eux c'est la vie. Il ne faut pas chercher à comprendre. Il faut prendre les choses comme elles viennent, maudire et pester par habitude, ne pas avoir l'écume aux lèvres mais un sourire, une plaisanterie. Et ne même pas cacher son égoïsme. L'homme n'est qu'un homme et la vie est courte. Cette attitude n'est peut-être pas la meilleure, ils la paieront peut-être cher un jour. Voilà ce qu'on nous apprenait. Mais, en fin de compte, il faudrait être fou pour se tourmenter par un après-midi pareil avec des pensées qui n'apporteront rien à personne. Je préfère boire une bière et fumer une cigarette. Pourquoi faut-il toujours que je cherche des fraises des bois dans les cimes des arbres, les yeux honteusement tournés vers le sol? Il ne faut pas descendre parce qu'en bas il n'y a ni bourrasques, ni nuages, ni bruit, ni vacarme...*⁷⁰

Such behaviour represented a desire to continue 'playing ball'. A degree of egotism was permissible in the interests of keeping up collective spirits.

With the passing of time, however, and the increasing strain on the population, together with the increasing repression of Vichy and the Germans, it became harder for the French to maintain their characteristic humour in the face of such suffering. What Werth could not accept was that this increase in suffering made no visible impact on the behaviour and actions of the French people. Mauriac was another, who felt that continuing as if everything was normal was merely a resignation to defeat. The leitmotiv of *les pêcheurs à la ligne*, recorded by many other diarists, held no interest for Mauriac as he believed that this indifference was merely a disguise for self-interest:

«Voilà ce qui nous sauvera: c'est la mollesse de cette population...» Hé bien, non: nous croyons en l'homme; nous croyons avec tous nos moralistes que l'homme peut être convaincu et persuadé: même ces bourgeois qui enfouissent des cassettes dans leurs massifs de bégonias, - oui, même ces intermédiaires pour la vente de toute denrée consommable, nous croyons qu'ils ferment les yeux et peut-être qu'ils serrent les poings, place de la

⁶⁹ Gide, *Journal*, pp.87-88. (19.7.41) This bears a remarkable resemblance to de Gaulle's own view. See also Galtier-Boissière, *Journal*, p.58. 29.8.41

⁷⁰ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.209. (3.8.41) See also p.251, (23.12.40) and Deharme, *Les années perdues*, p.75. (31.1.41)

*Concorde, devant ces drapeaux (je ne les ai jamais vus qu'à travers une brume de larmes) – ces drapeaux où la croix gammée ressemble à une araignée repue, gonflée de sang.*⁷¹

His Catholic faith made him believe that every French individual could block out the temptation to be consumed with self-interest and make a stand. Mauriac had no concept that this selfishness might have been motivated by something else other than greed. There was no thought that confronting the harsh realities of the Occupation required something more than a determined mind and steadfast spirit.

It would be wrong to say that this malleability was the one common trait in Parisian behaviour. These romantic images of Paris must be qualified. It is important to remember that while the diarists refer to other people's attitudes and behaviour during the Occupation, they themselves were overwhelmingly from a privileged background. Thérive was a writer who had the means to escape the suffering, which afflicted the poorer sections of Paris society:

*Notre dîner mensuel se cache au premier étage d'un hôtel discret, dans un quartier impossible. Une charmante atmosphère de confort, de conspiration, à cause des propos qu'on tient contre l'état des choses, et à cause du menu qui est le contraire de réglementaire.*⁷²

The diarists, therefore, were in an infinitely better position than ordinary citizens to appreciate the unique splendours of Paris. That is not to say that they did not have to experience the rigours of the Occupation. Galtier-Boissière was one of many to observe the deteriorating food supply: *“Le ravitaillement est très difficile. Souvent cet hiver, Charlotte se levait avant le jour pour faire la queue à la boucherie. Beaucoup de gens ont maigri de cinq, dix et même vingt kilos. «J'ai continuellement faim», me dit A.”*⁷³ Bobkowski revealed how the lack of food could have wider ramifications than just hunger:

*Un froid de canard. On mange de la vache enragée. C'est d'ailleurs tout ce qu'on peut trouver. Il n'y a pas un légume, même pas de navets. Pas une pomme de terre, pas une carotte. Rien. Si en décembre nous n'avions pas fait venir un sac de pommes de terre et quelques provisions, nous n'aurions rien à manger. Les gens sont devenus irritables, et le fameux humour des Français et leur familiarité ont disparu.*⁷⁴

It would follow, therefore, that the more one had to think about the struggle for survival, the less disposed one would be to appreciate the lighter side of life. The

⁷¹ Mauriac, *Œuvres complètes*, p.364. See also Drieu, *Journal*, pp.224-225. (29.5.40)

⁷² Thérive, *L'envers du décor*, p.125. (May 1942) See also Cocteau, *Journal*, p.57. (26.3.42)

⁷³ Galtier-Boissière, *Journal*, p.30. (7.3.41) See Guéhénno, *Journal des années noires*, pp.82-83. (23.12.40)

⁷⁴ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.295. (5.2.42)

chasm of experience often between the rich and the poor is a fundamental concept and is one, perhaps, that may not have been considered sufficiently by the historiography of France because of its emphasis on political divisions. It may have been equally ignored by the diarists, as most were simply not directly exposed to the plight of the poor. This does not mean, however, that they were insensitive to it.⁷⁵

Thérive commented:

Je viens d'avoir l'impression poignante qu'il existe deux Frances. Le matin à 6 heures, dans le métro nocturne, une foule prolétarienne, sale, noire, mal nourrie, qui, avec des mines hagardes, gagne l'atelier en rongant des quignons de pain. A 11 heures, la ligne de démarcation franchie, dans une gare de la Creuse, des familles de hobereaux amenés par leurs voitures, leur chauffeur portant des valises, des jeunes gens avec une raquette sous le bras, les embrassades, les papotages, les recommandations pour un service de porcelaine que la tante Emma va acheter à Limoges à titre de cadeau de noces. «Avec un filet doré, mais pas comme celui de Monique, surtout...» Les deux morceaux de France ne se recolleront peut-être jamais, ou, s'ils se recollent, la brisure s'étendra ailleurs.⁷⁶

This idea of two Frances in a socio-economic sense rather than in a physical or political sense is very significant when considering the obsession of the French people with survival.

The Parisian underprivileged were especially afflicted by the penury of provisions. The German war economy saw most material leave Paris for the Reich and there was nothing coming back in return. There was no increase in goods for consumption even though the German Occupation forces had first share of the markets, and even those who worked could buy nothing as the shops were often empty. Yet the big problem was that produce from the provinces was not getting through as before due to problems of petrol shortages and the requisitioning of lorries and trains by the Germans.⁷⁷ Those who could afford to often went to the countryside to obtain food:

Le débarquement anglais tracasse tout de même les Français. Où aller en vacances, maintenant? La moitié de Paris passe l'été en Bretagne parce que

⁷⁵ Lannoy, François de, *Album mémorial Paris en guerre 1939-1944*, (Paris: Editions Heimdal, 1994) pp.110-111. For example, on July 27 1940, 150 859 people received the unemployment benefit in Paris but this number would climb to 399 964 by November 23 1940. Yet after May 1941, unemployment started to drop significantly; in November 1941 the figure would drop to 100 000 and 42 000 in August 1942. This dramatic drop can be explained by the adaptation of the Parisian economy.

⁷⁶ Thérive, *L'envers du décor*, p.111. (19.3.42) See also Deharme, *Les années perdues*, p.92. (23.9.41)

⁷⁷ Perrault, Gilles, *Paris sous l'occupation*, (Paris: Belfond, 1987) p.186. See Veillon, *Vivre et survivre en France*, pp.120-121 for statistics on the decrease in food rations.

*c'est là qu'on trouve le plus de beurre, d'œufs et de lait, et voilà que les Anglais commencent à leur faire peur pour de bon.*⁷⁸

For the other half, who had no contacts in the countryside or who could not afford to leave Paris, the situation was much more grim:

*On a un peu honte de manger. Les pauvres gens du quartier n'ont plus de pain. Ils ont dès maintenant utilisé tous les tickets de février. Si nous mangeons encore à la maison, c'est que nous sommes des bourgeois et qu'à grands frais nous pouvons faire venir de Bretagne des colis.*⁷⁹

The black market created a parallel economy which did not enrich the state coffers and, therefore, the authorities were obliged to raise taxes to gain more revenue.⁸⁰ Parisians had to become innovative. Tomato plants were grown on rooftops, potatoes in courtyards and cat numbers began to dwindle, even after the newspapers published after 31 October 1941 that the cats carried dangerous diseases.⁸¹

The juxtaposition of the hardships of the Occupation and the need to carry on with one's life is a constant theme with all aspects of the Occupation. Moreover, it is one which can be interpreted differently by the diarists. Take the following romantic image conjured up by Toesca:

*Aujourd'hui, dimanche. Temps idéal: fraîcheur de l'air. Soleil. Il court dans Paris une brise de haute montagne. La pluie récente a donné de l'éclat aux légumes. Les arbres, le ciel, les êtres sont heureux de vivre. Les jeunes filles sortent avec leurs seins nouveaux, qui ont poussé sous la tiédeur des manteaux d'hiver. La mode, par nécessité de la bicyclette, accentue cette effervescence des corps. Jambes et cuisses au vent, souvent joliment teintées d'ocre léger. Vus de loin, dans le mouvement et le flottis des étoffes légères, ces corps sont agiles, ailés, gentils... On a beaucoup de mal à penser à la guerre, à la mort, à la misère. Pourtant... Dès que je suis chez moi, ces réalités m'agissent: j'écoute un instant la radio; je vois rôder la faim. Moi-même j'évoque mélancoliquement sur une assiette tiède un «tournedos» Epais et saignant. Vision réfugiée depuis longtemps dans le domaine des songes gastronomiques.*⁸²

What is the lasting impression of this image? Does the romanticism override the realism? It appears that the hardships of the Occupation became more acute in the private world whereas outside the private sphere the collective spirit of Paris was much more upbeat. Again, it is a question of perspective and experience. Bobkowski was amazed how free he was able to move around Occupied France, yet he was a

⁷⁸ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, pp.333-334. (9.6.42) See also Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.196. (13.10.41) Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.89. (3.1.41)

⁷⁹ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, pp.103-104. (21.2.41)

⁸⁰ Lannoy, *Paris en guerre*, p.111.

⁸¹ Perrault, *Paris sous l'occupation*, pp.40-42.

⁸² Toesca, *Cinq ans de patience*, p.170. (19.5.43)

Pole who was accustomed to much greater surveillance and restriction.⁸³ Yet the following quotation seems extraordinary within the context of the Occupation:

*Deuxième anniversaire de la guerre. J'ai du mal à le croire. Pour l'instant, on a réussi à tenir le coup. Jusqu'à présent, j'ai eu de la chance. J'ai honte de le dire, mais malgré tout ce qui nous est arrivé, je ne me suis jamais senti aussi heureux que ces dernières années, même pendant ces deux années de guerre. C'est la première fois de ma vie que je me sens aussi bien. J'écris cela en étant en pleine possession de mes moyens. Je suis incapable de m'expliquer ce phénomène. C'est ce que j'éprouve et je n'y peux rien. Peut-être suis-je unique en mon genre à l'heure actuelle? La vie, cette vie merveilleuse, riche, le Paris du temps en guerre, chaque journée, m'envahissent totalement.*⁸⁴

It is unlikely that he would have felt this way had he been exposed to the deprivations which the poorer sections of Parisian society had to endure or indeed those of his fellow Polish citizens. Yet what his testimony provides is evidence contrary to the notion that life during the Occupation was always arduous.

Personal experience was crucial in forming opinion. The seemingly banal statement of Werth carries a lot more truth to it than first appears: "*L'homme est une drôle de bête. Tous les soucis que j'ai de moi-même et du monde sont balayés parce que j'ai réussi à réparer mon briquet.*"⁸⁵ Individual concerns could do much to sway opinion or block out other troubles. Guéhenno had admiration for a friend who refused to let despair get the better of him. This was someone who refused to stop 'playing ball':

*J'admire dans Jean Paulhan ce don qu'il a d'alléger la vie autour de lui. Quel camarade délicieux et comme il m'aura aidé à vivre dans cette prison. Il marche comme un funambule, se dressant à chaque pas sur la pointe des pieds, et si l'on marche près de lui, presque tout de suite on éprouve qu'on marche plus légèrement. Ce n'est pas qu'il ne soit grave au fond de lui, mais il n'accepte pas que sa gravité l'accable.*⁸⁶

This outward sign of insouciance went very much against Guéhenno's belief that the Occupation had imprisoned the French, and yet it is interesting to note that he admired such behaviour. There was a free spirit within him that could not be taken away by the Germans and yet someone like Cocteau had the very same attitude.

⁸³ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, pp.339-340. (28.6.42)

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.214. (1.9.41)

⁸⁵ Werth, *Déposition*, p.266. (16.2.42)

⁸⁶ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.189. (26.9.41) See Werth, *Déposition*, p.210. (28.5.41) One could become desensitised to the war but that does not necessarily mean it no longer failed to make an impact.

It raises the issue of what the diarists chose to talk about. Those who wrote about the marvels of Paris during the Occupation were, in part, responding to those very marvels. There is a kind of reciprocation between what the diarist observed and how that observation affected the diarist. When the diarist recorded the beauty of Paris, it was not an impartial view but, rather, a recognition that that beauty had affected the diarist. Similarly, if one was to focus on the negative aspects of the Occupation, rather than the uplifting images, it was an indication of the state of mind of the diarist. Bobkowski, with little work for him to do in the summer of 1942, had time to remark upon the fashion and perfume of the women: “*Paris est baigné de soleil et de chaleur; la vie, qui s’est plus ou moins adaptée aux conditions actuelles, refleurit avec une insouciance bien française, elle est tout sourire.*”⁸⁷ There is a desire to record this behaviour because it is inspiring. On the other hand, there was a reluctance to dwell on any negative behaviour. As Guéhenno admitted:

*Il semble que ce pays meure comme mis au rancart du monde. Et sa mort n’est que le plus infime fait divers en marge de l’événement. Si je n’ai rien écrit dans ces cahiers, c’est qu’il n’est pas bien utile de noter sans doute qu’il neige, que nous avons faim, que nous avons froid, que les fusillades continuent, deux ou trois chaque jour (elles n’ont même plus les honneurs de la première page dans les journaux), que les gens n’en pensent plus rien, sauf Marcel Déat peut-être qui ajoute chaque matin une strophe à sa cantate de l’ordre nouveau.*⁸⁸

When the majority of the population was waiting for the war to be brought to an end, there was only so much of the horrors they could absorb. As Guéhenno alludes to, one became desensitised in a way to the shooting of hostages by the Germans. It was not that they were any less horrible but, rather, that the French felt more and more hopeless to do anything about it. To focus on that would be giving into despair:

*J’ai pensé à tous ceux qui, dans les grandes villes surtout, souffrent de plus en plus cruellement de la faim. Une chose me frappe: de plus en plus, dans la rue, on croise des gens qui ont l’air fatigué, qui ont mauvaise mine, qui marchent lentement, qui ont du mal à porter leur fardeau. Si je me laissais aller, je noterais chaque jour à quel point je souffre de voir tant de misère autour de nous.*⁸⁹

Taking the time to appreciate something positive was important in terms of being able to continue one’s life with some degree of purpose. If one lost all hope, was that not just as bad as siding with the enemy? The problem was that too often

⁸⁷ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.337. (25.6.42)

⁸⁸ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, pp.238-239. (14.2.42) See also Deharme, *Les années perdues*, p.151. (3.5.43)

⁸⁹ Boegner, *Les carnets du Pasteur Boegner*, p.164. (2.2.42)

such behaviour could be seen as acceptance of defeat and that acceptance could often lead to an acceptance of the German presence in France, as well as an ease of interaction with them. Guéhenno had no time for those who felt one had to make the best of the situation. The Occupation was a prison and one did not converse with the guards. Yet other diarists felt that such behaviour was merely an adaptation to the defeat in order to overcome the difficult situation and resist the temptation to fall into despair. The following observation of Bobkowski admirably portrays the complexity and ambiguity of the French people during the Occupation:

*Paris et la pensée française sont un mélange de champagne, de pêche, de bourgogne, de sardines, et de fromages. Savoureux, excitants, digestes, épicés, relevés, légers. Et pratiques. Les Français n'aiment pas les surhommes et les idées supérieures. C'est ce qui leur donne toujours de l'attrait, même si on peut parfois en avoir assez et même les mépriser en tant qu'individus. Leur comportement pendant cette guerre est peut-être simplement humain et pratique? Pratique, certainement. La meilleure preuve, c'est que je reviens tranquillement du théâtre et que je peux réfléchir à tout cela. [...] Les Français s'en tireront. Mieux: ce seront des héros. Et tout recommencera: hier, je ne les supportais plus; aujourd'hui, je les aime; demain, je les maudirai...*⁹⁰

He raises the interesting notion that the French, as individuals, were more suspect in their behaviour than they were collectively, where presumably their *légère* and *pratique* attitude cancelled out their individual weaknesses. The problem was that after the Liberation, individuals would be singled out for punishment rather than the French people collectively.

⁹⁰ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, pp.197-198. (17.5.41)

Part Two

Pour la patrie ou pour l'homme intérieur?

«Dès ce jour, je vis clairement que les événements ne sont rien, que l'homme intérieur est tout.» Pour que l'homme intérieur soit tout, il faut qu'il se soustraie à l'événement ou que, cédant à l'événement, il ne lui cède que son corps. Si l'univers l'écrase, tant pis pour l'univers.⁹¹

The uneven material decline.

The Nazi aim in France was to systematically plunder agricultural foodstuffs and materials to sustain its war machine. As Goering put it in August 1942: “*If the French hand over until they can't hand over any more, and if they do it of their own free will, then I'll say I'm collaborating.*”⁹² Material problems were a constant felt and recorded by the diarists throughout the Occupation but what varied was the extent to which the diarists experienced these material difficulties. Out of all the material difficulties, food was the problem that dominated the thoughts of the diarists the most: “*Si je cite ces lignes c'est que, relisant les lettres reçues à cette époque, je remarque avec quel soin tous mes correspondants décrivaient leurs repas; Olga même n'y manquait pas. Manger était un problème crucial.*”⁹³ Class or wealth, moreover, were not always a determining factor. This section is concerned with examining the different levels – whether they be regional or individual – of material problems experienced by the diarists, the different ways they overcame those material problems, and whether that impacted on how they viewed their situation in relation to the needs of the nation.

Each diarist endured the Occupation as part of a collective experience, yet their experiences can be seen in a wide variety of contexts. Gide argued from his vantage point in Algeria:

⁹¹ Werth, *Déposition*, p.50. (2.10.40)

⁹² Jackson, *The dark years*, p.215.

⁹³ De Beauvoir, *La force de l'âge*, p.565. Even Jünger (*Premier journal parisien*, p.206) felt obliged to record at the end of 1942: *Au demeurant, la pure et simple découverte de la nourriture est devenue un tour de force, car il n'y a presque plus rien dans les boutiques, et la famine gagne du terrain.* (3.10.42)

*Les gens de ce pays paraissent à ceux du Nord presque indifférents et insensibles à la catastrophe qui mutile la France. Il faut des qualités de cœur et d'esprit très rares pour être sincèrement ému par ce qui ne nous atteint pas personnellement.*⁹⁴

The effects of the Occupation would take time to filter down to every region of France. The lack of fraternity was certainly encouraged by the circumstances of the *débâcle* but there was also an unwillingness to allow the experiences of others to overshadow the experiences of those seemingly unaffected by the Occupation. The Occupation, therefore, struck a great blow to French national identity, and the preoccupation with survival would only exacerbate the process of national disintegration. The altruistic sentiment of the following newspaper article would certainly not endure beyond the summer of 1940:

*Le rationnement nous montre le visage de la défaite, il faut payer, il faut montrer la solidarité avec tous les Français. Nous qui mangeons le blé venu d'autres régions, il faut nous priver de notre huile d'olive pour accroître le stock en matières grasses de la nation tout entière.*⁹⁵

Solidarity would become unrealistic when restrictions became more global and every region in France started to feel the pinch.⁹⁶

Whilst the Occupation was a period filled with significant historical events, the diarists observed that the primary focus for the French people was on survival. As Werth neatly put it: "*Toile de fond: Syrie, Russie. Premier plan: ventre et tabac.*"⁹⁷ The rumbling of stomachs would only increase as the Occupation wore on, as the official rations would only become more meagre. One could argue that it was both Vichy's and Germany's inability to find a solution to the supply problems that would account for the overwhelming indifference of the French population:

La grande désolation du pays, il n'est pas donné à tant de Français, ni constamment, de la sentir. Ce que l'on éprouve bien plutôt, ce sont des douleurs particulières; et, pour la plupart, c'est la gêne des restrictions, l'inconfort de l'exil, la crainte de la disette de demain. Si la domination allemande devait nous assurer l'abondance, neuf Français sur dix l'accepteraient; dont trois ou quatre avec sourire. Et il n'y a pas à s'en indigner, non plus que ce que j'en dis. Ceux qui sont capables de s'émouvoir authentiquement pour des motifs intellectuels sont très rares; capables de

⁹⁴ Gide, *Journal*, p.41. 16.7.40

⁹⁵ *L'Eclaireur de Nice et du Sud-Est*, (4 August 1940) Veillon, *Vivre et survivre en France*, pp.90-91.

⁹⁶ Jackson, *The dark years*, pp.249-250. The level of rations for the largest category of the population was 1 327 calories per day as opposed to an average of 3 000 per day before the war. This barely adequate ration was steadily reduced as the Occupation progressed, and even then it was difficult to acquire.

⁹⁷ Werth, *Déposition*, p.223. (30.6.41)

*souffrir de carences non matérielles. Et peut-être vaut-il mieux qu'il en soit ainsi.*⁹⁸

Werth was one of those rare individuals who could do just that. He was discouraged how the cult of individuality appeared to have blinded the majority of the Saint-Amour locals to the events of the war or the climate on the domestic front:

*Les gens de Bourg ne pensent qu'à leur ventre. J'aimerais mieux dire: ne pensent que leur ventre. Le reste, ils ne le pensent pas. Mais ils le sentent vaguement. Les grands événements ne sont un excitant, un bouleversement de pensée que pour les forts.*⁹⁹

Werth's situation in Saint-Amour may well have contributed to his capacity to think beyond his personal problems. The last quotation indicates that life in Saint-Amour was relatively easy in comparison with what other diarists experienced. Despite his reproaches, Werth owed his peasant farmer friend, Laurent, a debt of gratitude. He ensured that Werth never went hungry: "*Quant aux paysans, ils pensent que, quoi qu'il arrive, ils ne mourront jamais de faim [...] Je mangerai du boudin demain. Laurent va tuer un cochon non déclaré, un cochon qui fait dans les cent trente kilos.*"¹⁰⁰ The other diarists, who lived overwhelmingly in urban areas and often had families to feed, were much more preoccupied with the quest for food. The peasants' relatively comfortable lives stirred up envy and jealousy particularly amongst the urban workers:

*Ce qu'il y a d'idéal, d'espoir humain dans la révolution échappe aux paysans d'ici. Pour eux, elle n'est que colère de la faim. «Si tout se termine comme on espère, me dit Laurent, c'est-à-dire si les Boches s'en vont, les Anglais pour rattraper les Boches ou les Boches pour n'être pas rattrapés détruiront les voies de chemin de fer. Les villes ne seront plus ravitaillées. Alors les ouvriers – moi, je ne leur donne pas tort et moi, je ferais comme eux, parce que la faim, c'est la faim – les ouvriers viendront piller les fermes.»*¹⁰¹

Certainly there was a degree of plundering of the countryside by those visiting from the towns or by those selling produce on the black market to the highest bidder, who invariably came from an urban centre.¹⁰² Yet what this clearly indicates is that the

⁹⁸ Gide, *Journal*, pp.36-37. (9.7.40) See also Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, pp.348-349, (26.8.42)

⁹⁹ Werth, *Déposition*, p.165. (31.1.41) See p.494. (8.7.43) Werth was greatly disappointed in the absence of revolutionary spirit shown by the Saint-Amour peasantry.

¹⁰⁰ Werth, *Déposition*, p.116: (1.12.40)

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.359. (12.10.42) See p.329. He refers to the peasants as a *nouvelle bourgeoisie, celle du lard et du pain blanc*. (30.7.42)

¹⁰² Jackson, *The dark years*, pp.250-251. For example, on two days in April 1942, the police searched every passenger at Lille railway station. They seized 9 550 kilos of potatoes, 170 kilos of beans, 120 kilos of peas, 430 kilos of wheat, 70 kilos of meat, 230 eggs and 16 chickens. But most individuals

Occupation was not kind to the urban workers, and that the peasant farmers were at a distinct advantage. Survival was up to the individual and it was not only where the individual was geographically placed that could determine how difficult it would be for that individual to survive. Some were more favourably disposed to overcome the material difficulties than others because of their jobs, their wealth, or their contacts. It was better, for example, to be young and resourceful rather than a wife of a prisoner of war, or a mine worker in the Nord, where one was entitled to supplementary rations, rather than an office worker in Paris.¹⁰³

The changing fate of the war after the Allied landing in North Africa did nothing to stop the diarists' obsession with material needs. If anything, due to Germany's increasing desperation, it only intensified the problem. The following passage from Roussin indicates a significant change from his initial opinion:

*Mais la fièvre était là, avec des heures d'abattement où je pensais à tout ce qui se passait dans le monde et où je me trouvais grotesque, centré sur mes petites histoires et mes problèmes d'horlogerie dramatique, comme si le monde précisément n'existait pas. [...] Mais rien n'irait vite encore et pour moi se posaient constamment des problèmes à résoudre de logement, de chauffage et de fonds nécessaires à la subsistance de ma petite famille.*¹⁰⁴

Roussin would come to realise that he could not hide away from the war and its effects. Yet the last phrase suggests that however much his opinion had changed, he was still very much centred on his *petites histoires*. The sense of being caught up in a wider problem did not translate into compassion for others nor did it steer him away from his preoccupation with his own particular interests and those of his immediate family. Even Werth, who experienced comparatively no real problems with obtaining food, would come to realise that not all of France was in such a fortunate position:

*Leur ai-je assez reproché, aux gens du bourg, de ne penser qu'à leur ventre! La vérité est qu'ils avaient quelque prévoyance et quelques notions de bons sens et d'économie. Maintenant je crains sans cesse que Suzanne et Claude, à Paris, n'aient faim. Quant à moi, je suis mou comme un cheval privé d'avoine.*¹⁰⁵

It is only natural to assume that those diarists such as Roussin, who were directly responsible for their family's survival as well as their own, should dedicate more time and effort to preoccupying themselves with everyday survival.

only carried small quantities of goods (between 10 and 30 kilos), which they felt was for their own legitimate use.

¹⁰³ Veillon, *Vivre et survivre en France*, p.163.

¹⁰⁴ Roussin, *Rideau gris et habit vert*, pp.120-121.

¹⁰⁵ Werth, *Déposition*, p.480. (29.5.43) See also Deharme, *Les années perdues*, p.92. (23.9.41)

The historian Gildea argues that though severe shortages and high prices set the French against each other in the struggle for survival, their inventiveness allowed them to get by. Those living in the country managed to avoid pressure from the German and French authorities to hand over their produce in order to keep enough back for a parallel market supply for friends and relatives in exchange for clothing and other manufactured goods, which were hard to come by in the country. The *Système D* or *Système de débrouillage* required the French to establish new networks and to cooperate as never before. Survival was not only about queuing and scratching out a meagre existence but also developing family, neighbourhood and business contacts to ensure the continuation of one's survival. Solidarity and inventiveness were essential to offset the failure of the Vichy government to adequately provide for the French people.¹⁰⁶ The diaries certainly provide examples of the *Système D*. Rist grew his own potatoes to supplement the insufficient official ration:

*Nous ramassons nos pommes de terre et nous écossons le soir nos flageolets. La récolte de pommes de terre sera plus faible que nous ne pensions. Si nous avons 300 à 350 kilos, ce sera un maximum. C'est de quoi passer trois mois avec notre grande maisonnée. Les attributions officielles – si elles se réalisent – nous donnent par mois pour toute la maison 34 kilos!*¹⁰⁷

Yet Gildea's argument suggests that everyone had the means of forming these contacts or finding ways to supplement their official rations. If that were true, how does one explain that France's caloric intakes were the lowest in Europe?¹⁰⁸

Furthermore, Gildea may be right that these networks put in place by the French people went beyond the individual level but he fails to acknowledge that it was ultimately the individual's interests driving these exchanges. These networks were not motivated by the desire to improve the life of the local or national community but to secure the best possible life for that individual or that individual's immediate family. The fact that networks were established is more an indication of how desperate the French were to secure scarce resources rather than a sign of willingness to cooperate for the greater collective gain. Thérive observed two people at a restaurant decide to share a bottle of wine, which would have otherwise been beyond their means. But they made sure that each one got an equal measure: "*Intéressant symptôme de l'esprit communautaire chez les Français, et de ses*

¹⁰⁶ Gildea, *Marianne in chains*, p.111.

¹⁰⁷ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.270. (5.9.42)

¹⁰⁸ Jackson, *The dark years*, p.223. It is important to acknowledge that such comparisons are difficult to make because of significant regional variations but this, nevertheless, suggests that some were clearly missing out.

limites.”¹⁰⁹ The French were willing to cooperate beyond the individual level but only if it best served their own interests. On vacation in Montolieu, Guéhenno remarked that although there was a drought and the people talked of a famine, he was aware that the peasant farmers were still eating behind closed doors. Only those who were passing through went hungry, which caused him to reflect on these farmers:

*Les paysans des fermes alentour ne savent pas bien que penser: les règlements de Vichy les agacent, mais c'est tout de même un fameux temps que celui où on peut vendre un œuf six francs, un lapin de garenne pris au piège dans le champ du voisin soixante francs.*¹¹⁰

If food shortages were more marked in the towns, why did this not translate into dissidence in urban areas? From the reading of the diaries, it appears that life in urban centres, on the whole, was certainly much more demanding, since there were greater numbers competing for resources.¹¹¹ The large sea ports of Nantes and Saint-Nazaire were even worse off, as they were not only deprived of overseas trade due to the Allied naval blockade but they were also cut off from the hinterland. Duméril, who lived in Nantes throughout the Occupation, noticed the consequence of France's integration into the German war economy. Not only was there the systematic requisition of industrial goods by the Germans – the railway lines of Nantes-Châteaubriant, the metal of statues with the exception of anti-English statues, tractors, horses and bicycles¹¹² – but also the systematic requisition of agricultural goods. It was the latter that preoccupied the Nantes population the most:

*D'autre part, le gouvernement français a fait arrêter dans toute la zone occupée (et peut-être l'autre?) pour les interner, tous les gens suspects de communisme, dans la nuit du 26 / 27 septembre. Une réglementation plus sévère de la côte est aussi paraît-il en préparation. Mais ce qui domine pour le grand public, c'est le souci de manger. Car la pénurie de vivres se fait de plus en plus forte. Le beurre a tout à fait disparu ou presque, et les œufs également, même cet été. Il y a des «fuites» inexplicables, dues au marché noir, probablement.*¹¹³

This passage aptly shows where the priorities of the Nantes population lay. Duméril believed that the result of the material decline was a moral decline. The following

¹⁰⁹ Thérive, *L'envers du décor*, p.187. (10.11.43)

¹¹⁰ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.346. (20.7.43) See also Gide, *Journal*, p.163. (3.1.43) It would be unfair to say that all these exchanges were motivated by greed. Laurent, for example, was only too happy to provide food for Werth.

¹¹¹ Jackson, *The dark years*, pp.249-250. Histoy confirms this impression. In thirty-nine mainly rural départements, mortality rates in 1941-1943 were lower than in 1936-1938, whereas in cities they were higher.

¹¹² Duméril, *Journal d'un honnête homme pendant l'occupation*, p.206.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p.234. (30.9.42) See Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, (p.324. (1.3.43)) for a similar account of the difficulties experienced in Paris. See also Galtier-Boissière, *Journal*, p.30. (7.3.41)

observation was inspired by another letter of denouncement which he was exposed to through his work. He believed that the cumulative effect of the material restrictions was placing further strain on a nation already afflicted with deep divisions:

*Il ne faut pas que cette situation se prolonge des années, tout comme la misère au point de vue physique. Notre pauvre peuple se dégraderait de toutes manières, physiquement et moralement, si cette misère durait des années encore. En effet à l'autre guerre, il y a eu des pertes et misères énormes, mais l'espoir de la victoire était là, toujours. Cette fois, notre peuple a été découragé et ballotté de toutes manières, surtout par la division entre Français qui n'a que trop duré et qui a amené des dénonciations et des rancunes inexpiables.*¹¹⁴

Duméril reveals that life in Nantes was brutal and that even someone working in conjunction with the German military authorities was still very much affected. Yet on a deeper level, his argument also suggests that the negative impact on the moral behaviour of the French people, caused by the deteriorating material situation, was inevitable. There was only so much the people of Nantes could physically withstand and, therefore, the closer they reached those physical limits, the more inclined they were to turn against one another.

Bobkowski noted that the preoccupation with food caused a similar lack of collective spirit amongst the Parisians. They became so obsessed with the desire to have things return to their accustomed manner that they neglected their duty to their country:

*Le bifteck. Quand on parle de la France, c'est un élément qu'on ne peut pas négliger, le bifteck est le problème n°1 des Français, du haut en bas de l'échelle. Patriotisme, liberté, patrie? Que non! Un bifteck! Un chateaubriand épais, saignant, à point, tendre. Ils attendent les Américains, mais croyez-vous qu'ils en attendent leur liberté, leur indépendance? Non. D'abord du corned-beef et des confitures...*¹¹⁵

The following timetable of a Parisian woman on February 15, 1943 illustrates how the penury of provisions could sway the French from more noble concepts:

7h30: chez le boulanger. Achat de pain. Il y aura des biscottes à 11 heures. 9heures: jour de viande. Le boucher prévient qu'elle ne sera distribuée que samedi. 9h30: chez le crémier. Il ne recevra le fromage qu'à 17 heures. 10 heures: chez le tripier. Mon numéro 32 passera à 16 heures. 10h30: chez

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.299. (14.7.43) See also p.234. (30.9.42) See also Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.360. (6.9.42)

¹¹⁵ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, pp.315-316. (22.3.42) See also Galtier-Boissière, *Journal*, p.208. (July 1944)

*l'épicier, il y aura des légumes à 17 heures. 11 heures: retour chez le boulanger. Il n'y a plus de biscottes.*¹¹⁶

This woman waited four and a half hours for practically nothing, with the prospect of more waiting in the afternoon and no guarantee of getting what she was entitled to. Faced with such a timetable, it is easy to see why selfish preoccupations overshadowed other concerns. Moreover, it demonstrates how those living in urban areas often simply had no time to worry about anything other than their individual concerns.

Yet does the absence of any revolutionary spirit amongst the overwhelming majority of the French imply that in some small part, however grave the material situation in which they found themselves, it was not so desperate as to make them take matters into their own hands? Certainly there were demonstrations – mostly in the South – but the Germans, and later the *milice*¹¹⁷, were quick to stamp out any threat of disorder.¹¹⁸ Yet Werth had observed very early on an underlying feeling of relief that the Occupation would not make a negative impact on rural life:

*Laurent a craint aussi des réquisitions globales de bétail, de cochons, de blé, d'avoine. J'ai senti alors en lui la colère du paysan qui prend sa fourche. «On ne sait pas ce qui peut arriver, m'a-t-il dit. Ça pourrait bouger dans les campagnes. Quand l'homme a faim...» Il attribuait alors aux Allemands l'intention d'affamer la France et se méfiait du gouvernement dans la main de l'Allemagne. Aujourd'hui, il attend sans inquiétude. Il est convaincu que ni Hitler ni Pétain ne seront assez malins pour lui prendre sa ferme, tout son bétail, toute sa récolte.*¹¹⁹

The phrase *Quand l'homme a faim...* implies that dissidence comes from hunger but this never eventuated on any significant scale anywhere in France. Bobkowski argued that the real rigours of the war had yet to reach France: “*La guerre dure déjà depuis quatre ans, mais pour la France, elle n'a pas encore commencé. Pour elle et pour beaucoup d'autres pays, elle ne commencera... qu'après la guerre.*”¹²⁰ He often observed how the French constantly complained of the food shortages but, in his

¹¹⁶ Veillon, *Vivre et survivre en France*, p.220. See also pp.120-121 The extension of military operations on several fronts, particularly in Russia, increased the demands of the Germans. The official ration of 360g of meat, in theory, was reduced to 120g in 1943. In Seine-et-Oise, from December 1940 to the Liberation, the meat rations were only honoured in December 1941 and January 1942. Until the spring of 1942 the quantity effectively distributed varied between 90 and 100g per week. It got even worse after that date, reaching as low as 60g in January 1944.

¹¹⁷ See Giolitto, Pierre, *Histoire de la milice*, (Paris: Perrin, 1997) for an insight into the notorious Vichy police.

¹¹⁸ See Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy*, p.268 and Jackson, *The dark years*, pp.276-277.

¹¹⁹ Werth, *Déposition*, pp.74-75 (25.10.40) See also Toesca, *Cinq ans de patience*, pp.86-87. (5.9.40)

¹²⁰ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.507. (19.8.43)

eyes, France was still a rich nation in comparison with Poland.¹²¹ Certainly the food situation leading up to and after the Liberation deteriorated rapidly, as priority for supplies was given priority to the advancing Allies,¹²² yet there was never any sign of any real dissidence against either Vichy or the German occupation force. Although not applying to the same context, the following phrase recorded by de Beauvoir at a lunch with two Parisian women is most appropriate: “*«Persecutés ou non, les gens qui ont quelque chose dans le ventre s’en sortent toujours.»*”¹²³ The woman was in fact talking about the persecuted Jews, who were perceived to have the necessary means to get by. Yet the same principle can apply on a more global scale with respect to the diarists and the supply problems. No matter how much the diarists were afflicted by the material decline, they were still able to endure the problem. Bobkowski believed that despite the war and despite the German plundering of stock and produce there was still a choice of what one could buy and it was not always expensive:

*Bien que ce soit la guerre en France, on continue à voir des vestiges de richesse. En dépit du pillage allemand, en dépit des réquisitions répétées, on ne peut pas parler de famine. Il y a toujours du choix, il y a toujours une certaine variété et il est possible d’organiser sa «petite vie». On retrouve dans l’atmosphère ce rien qui a si vite fait de vous rendre heureux.*¹²⁴

Diarists such as Cocteau or Deharme, who were able to dine at restaurants where adequate food was still available, may well have agreed with Bobkowski. The peasant farmer or those urban dwellers who had contacts in the countryside might also have agreed. There may well have been general hardship, and the diarists may well have devoted a lot of their time to the *quête du ravitaillement*. The material problems may well have prevented active support for Vichy or Germany but at the same time they were insufficiently severe to provoke active resistance.

La patrie and patriotism.

No one could dispute the fact that the catastrophic defeat had seen the fall of France as a nation. The Germans occupied not just Paris, as they had done after the Franco-Prussian war, but almost two-thirds of France. Eventually the whole of France

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp.110-111. (14.9.40) and p.170. (2.11.40)

¹²² See Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.398, (10.4.44) and Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.580. (13.7.44)

¹²³ De Beauvoir, *La force de l’âge*, p.486.

¹²⁴ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.453. (13.4.43)

would be occupied, and those living in the so-called *zone libre* would be freed from the illusion that French sovereignty still existed. All the diarists had to come to terms with the Occupation but not all of them felt the need to reflect on what the Occupation meant for the future of France. What is significant in this section to note, therefore, is not so much their reaction to the defeat of France but their reactions beyond the defeat. It was impossible to ignore the fact that France had been physically defeated but what of the more abstract notion of France as an idea? Did the German occupation fix the idea of France in a state of suspension or did it continue to exist in a state of perpetuity? The French were forced to look on as external forces decided the fate of France. Yet should their passivity be seen in a positive or negative light? Moreover, what role did the protagonists Pétain and de Gaulle have in shaping the idea of France? Can their roles be separated from the respective camps that they represented?

The overwhelming majority of the French population may have adopted an *attentiste* policy but what were they ultimately waiting for? The restoration of France as a nation or the restoration of their normal way of life? Werth, in particular, often called into question during the Occupation the existence of any tangible national sentiment amongst the French people:

*Quand, pour la première fois, je vis, près de Montargis, un régiment allemand fouler le sol français, ce régiment insultait à la fois mon sens national et à mon internationalisme. Egaleme nt blessés l'un et l'autre. Mais je ne savais pas encore que la France deviendrait, sous l'occupation allemande et sous l'occupation Pétain un mythe plus lointain, plus insaisissable que l'internationalisme.*¹²⁵

Not everyone would be exposed in 1940 to the physical occupation of French soil by the Germans. Neither would everyone share Werth's sense of national humiliation. Diarists, such as Roussin, felt too relieved that their corner of France appeared to be unaffected by the Occupation to be concerned that the rest of France was under a German stranglehold. Cocteau was too immersed in his work to concern himself with the wider implications of the Occupation. His *patrie*, which transgressed national borders, was his artistic world.¹²⁶ Duméril ultimately hoped for the restoration of France but was determined to extract the maximum good out of France's enforced relations with Germany.¹²⁷ Yet for diarists such as Guéhenno, Werth, and Rist, there

¹²⁵ Werth, *Déposition*, pp.66-67. (21.10.40) See also p.345. (4.9.42)

¹²⁶ Cocteau, *Journal*, p.31. (12.3.42)

¹²⁷ Duméril, *Journal d'un honnête homme pendant l'occupation*, p.233. (19.7.42)

was a seamless transition from the France of pre-1940 to the France of post-1940. France may well have been different in structure in terms of government and authority, not to mention physical structure, but the idea of France remained unchallenged for these diarists throughout the German occupation. The majority of the selected diarists made very few references to France as an idea, or at least made very few references to the notion of France as an idea. But does this necessarily mean that they were unconcerned with the fate of the French nation? Did their preoccupation with their own individual problems represent a loss of French national identity?

It is useful to look at the diarists who did concern themselves with an abstract notion of France and asked them to concern themselves with such thoughts in a time where survival of the individual was paramount. Werth liked a phrase he had heard on the English radio – “*Les Français qui sont en France éprouvent la même nostalgie de leur pays que ceux qui sont à l'étranger*”¹²⁸ – but did he fully grasp the ramifications of such a sentiment? This nostalgia for the way France used to be implies that France was viewed very differently during the Occupation. Indeed, as Bobkowski had observed, there was the temptation to take the view that France had ceased to exist with the signing of the armistice:

*«Cette période ne s'inscrira jamais dans l'histoire de France. Elle entrera dans l'histoire de l'occupation.» C'est ça, c'est exactement ça qui les perdra. Ils sont totalement aveugles. Ils se laissent encore plus leurrer par leur nationalisme et la France éternelle que nous par la Pologne.*¹²⁹

If the Occupation period was a parenthesis in French history, it meant that all the French had to do was to outlast the Occupation on an individual basis in order for France to restore itself on a national basis. The problem was that the lengthy duration of the Occupation created the temptation to narrow the focus of the French to their own personal interests:

*Mais il est vrai que beaucoup d'entre nous ne savent que la subir, que l'esclavage peut passer en habitude, qu'il a trouvé jusqu'à des amuseurs qui l'entretiennent, que la trop longue misère finit par réduire le meilleur à ne penser qu'à soi.*¹³⁰

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.375. (5.11.42)

¹²⁹ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.530. (13.10.43) See also Werth, *Déposition*, p.598. (4.4.44)

¹³⁰ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, pp.402-403. (25.3.44)

Guéhenno, who was evidently impressed by the courage displayed by those fighting in the Resistance, always maintained the hope that the French would contribute in some way to the restoration of France:

*Ces jeunes patriotes ne craignent rien tant que de paraître nationalistes. Et c'est là un de leurs traits les plus émouvants sans doute. Ils ne veulent pas que leurs souffrances leur fassent perdre la raison et réduisent en eux l'idée de la patrie.*¹³¹

Yet he himself played an active role in the literary Resistance. One did not have to be prepared to literally fight for the idea of France. One simply had to be willing to hold on to the idea of France. Like Werth, Guéhenno had witnessed the betrayal of France by certain people but he certainly did not feel that only a tiny minority were fighting to preserve the idea of France. The vast majority chose to neither collaborate nor resist. Does this imply a sense of national community? Was the fact that so few chose these two paths an indication of a national instinct to wait for more certain times? Was this, moreover, an indication that the overwhelming majority did believe, or at least hoped, that France would be eventually restored to its citizens? Can their decision, therefore, to remain outside these parameters be seen as motivated by a sense of national duty or was it simply a coincidence that so many individuals refused to make these extreme choices?

It is useful to examine those diarists who openly acknowledged that they no longer held any further regard for the idea of France. Drieu is an obvious example of someone who was prepared to give up the notion of France in order to embrace the fascist doctrine and the construction of a united Europe, which, in his eyes, would be a complete opposite to the antiquated and decadent France of old. Drieu raised the interesting point of what it felt like to be French and what the idea of being French meant to each French individual:

*J'ai toujours été partagé à l'égard de la France entre un sentiment et une idée. Le sentiment m'attache à cette chose qui fut énergique et exquise et qui l'est encore au fond du peuple et des monuments subsistants et chez quelques artistes contemporains – l'idée me fait voir la fin du temps des patries. Je vois l'étroitesse de ces formes qui ont été valables entre le XVe et le XIXe siècle, mais qui ne peuvent plus nourrir les nécessités humaines d'aujourd'hui.*¹³²

These two aspects, whilst connected to the same notion of *la patrie*, remained separate on a lower level. It was impossible to deny one's French cultural heritage but

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p.381. (5.1.44)

¹³² Drieu, *Journal*, p.205. (19.5.40)

it was possible to deny the future existence of France. It was the latter that separated Drieu from the other diarists and drove him to actively collaborate with the Germans:

*Il y a toujours en moi un goût de la catastrophe, de la défaite. J'ai reporté sur la France la défaillance de l'être en moi. Mais si je suis ainsi, la France doit être ainsi puisque je porte la France dans mes veines et que leur pulsation dit prophétiquement la santé de la France. Le temps des patries est passé. Never more. Plus jamais de France – ni d'Allemagne. Je sens que tout va se confondre dans une Europe, être nouveau étrange qui nous paraîtra monstrueux, forcément.*¹³³

Drieu does raise the interesting point of the parallel nature between the individual and one's country. Individuals who raised their own individual questions were at the same time raising the questions concerning their country. Since all the individuals collectively made up France, it was impossible to think in terms of the individual without thinking at the same time about the country of that particular individual. This goes against Cocteau's notion of the "*haute patrie*", where art transcended national borders.¹³⁴

The ambiguous nature of the idea of France allowed a certain degree of movement in opinion. This was particularly the case in the early years of the Occupation. Up until 1942, it remained possible for people of opposing views to maintain cordial relations. In May 1941, Drieu sent his latest book to Guéhenno with a dedication 'as a token of complete disagreement', which Guéhenno found "*plutôt gentil*". Similarly, Mauriac wrote to Drieu in December 1940, expressing his difference in opinion but at the same time maintaining that Drieu's position was 'defensible'. He remarked to the writer Jean Grenier, who was seeking advice on whether he should accept a position in the NRF which Drieu edited, that no one had the right to cast a stone at anybody, such was the state of France.¹³⁵ Although Mauriac could not envisage how France would be able to restore itself, he never gave up hope that this would happen. Yet, like Drieu, he believed that the defeat would permanently topple France from its pre-eminent position: "*Oui, une France même restaurée se trouvera reléguée à un rang modeste et, sur ce plan-là, aucune chance ne demeure pour nous de regagner la première place.*"¹³⁶ Other diarists, who did not share Drieu's extreme belief that the time of *patries* was over, agreed that individuals could share a common feeling of what it felt like to be French but could differ on the

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p.171. (11.4.40) See also p.327. (8.2.43)

¹³⁴ Cocteau, *Journal*, p.133. (23.5.42)

¹³⁵ Jackson, *The dark years*, p.275.

¹³⁶ Mauriac, *Œuvres complètes*, p.371. See also Drieu, *Journal*, p.501.

exact nature of what it meant to be French. Gide believed that it was impossible to renounce his French origins but for him the idea of being part of a French nation was far more abstract:

*Je me sens issu de la culture française; m'y rattache de toutes les forces de mon cœur et de mon esprit. Je ne puis m'écarter de cette culture qu'en me perdant de vue et qu'en cessant de me sentir moi-même; mais je crois que l'idée de patrie, dont on fait si grand abus en temps de guerre (où elle devient indispensable pour entraîner les hommes au combat et les rassembler sous un même drapeau), je crois que, cette idée, il est difficile de l'ancrer solidement dans le cœur de l'immense majorité des incultes; sinon par une simplification mensongère. Les intérêts particuliers, autour d'une entité: la France; autour d'un tronc, ce ne peut être qu'en l'ébranchant.*¹³⁷

The diarists overwhelmingly rejected Drieu's belief that France would never rise again from its defeat but Gide maintained that this conviction was tempered by the fear that any given individual might conceivably fail to outlast the war to see the restoration of France. The entire occupation of France after November 1942 and the increased repression of both Vichy and the German Occupation force only served to heighten that fear. Gide was prepared to recognise that the essence of France was still alive but he was certainly not prepared to sacrifice his life for some abstract notion, which had been used in the past to manipulate people's emotions. Could this be attributed to the fact that he spent the Occupation years in North Africa and, so, felt detached from the experiences of the French in a national sense? Regardless, it is evident that Gide felt that his own interests were of primary concern.

What was inexcusable in the minds of many diarists was the abandoning of France to pursue one's own interests. Many of the diarists were bitterly opposed to such a strategy, and this opposition became more acute as the Occupation wore on, with the growing realisation that Vichy's fortunes were tied in with those of Germany. Despite Mauriac's initial acceptance of Drieu's stance, he would come to have no sympathy for those who actively sought collaboration with Germany. He did not accept their argument that one could not betray France if France no longer existed. He saw behind their attempt to distance themselves from the idea of the French nation as a means of justifying their treasonous actions:

Les plus fins de ceux qui ont trahi pressentaient bien cette angoisse en nous: tous leurs discours, tous leurs écrits s'efforçaient de la réveiller. S'ils avaient atteint à nous persuader que la grande nation de naguère ne serait plus désormais qu'une comparse dans le conflit des empires, du même coup

¹³⁷ Gide, *Journal*, pp.191-192. (13.2.43)

*ils eussent été absous à leurs yeux et aux nôtres: là où les nations n'existent plus, le mot trahison n'a plus de sens. Quel n'eût été leur bonheur si vraiment la France avait pu passer pour morte! Car on ne saurait trahir une morte. A les entendre, ils avaient embrassé les genoux du vainqueur parce qu'ils ne trouvaient plus aucune patrie à qui se vouer. Nous observions de loin ces faux orphelins qui faisaient semblant de croire qu'ils n'avaient plus de mère.*¹³⁸

What mattered was not so much that France had physically been defeated but, rather, that the idea of France should live on despite the Occupation. Mauriac's strong religious faith prevented him from falling into total despair. In this last regard, there are striking similarities with Guéhenno, who also refused to dwell on the defeat. Guéhenno had no strong religious convictions but he shared Mauriac's strong conviction in the idea of France to the extent that he too entered the Resistance on a literary level. One article he wrote, which was never published, was entitled *La France qu'on n'envahit pas*. Guéhenno intended to use this article as a plea to every French citizen to lock themselves in the unobtainable fortress of the idea of France.¹³⁹

To give in to despair was to betray France, as despair was an act of resignation as well as an acceptance that France no longer existed. Guéhenno felt it was crucial for the French people to understand that the idea of France could not be taken away from them by the German invaders and that it was essential, for the rebuilding of the French nation, to remain positive about the idea of France: "*Je me réfugierai dans mon vrai pays. Mon pays, ma France est une France qu'on n'envahit pas.*"¹⁴⁰ The French had to resist Vichy propaganda and refuse to accept the idea that France was defeated, except in the military sense. Rist was equally firm in his idea of France. He believed that only a minority were willing to betray the idea of France by claiming that it had been relegated to the past. The fact that the overwhelming majority refused to join the ranks of these traitors was a sign of their belief in the idea of France and their hope that the French nation would be fully restored:

«Croire à la France.» Ce n'est pas croire à une abstraction définie par l'histoire des siècles passés. C'est croire aux Français d'aujourd'hui. C'est croire qu'il y a encore, dans les descendants actuels des Français du passé, assez de force, d'énergie, d'enthousiasme, de vertu, pour qu'ils puissent se

¹³⁸ Mauriac, *Œuvres complètes* p.370. See also Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, pp.421-422. (28.6.44)

¹³⁹ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.21. (5.7.40)

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.18. (25.6.40) See also: (27.6.40) 1° *Encore une fois mon pays, ce pays qui n'est qu'une idée, n'est pas envahi, ne le sera jamais.* 2° *Pétain n'est pas la France. Pétain et Laval ne parlent pas pour nous. Leur parole ne nous engage pas et ne saurait nous déshonorer.* 3° *La seule bonne mesure de l'événement doit être prise à l'échelle du monde. Dans le monde, la France n'est pas vaincue.*

*délivrer de l'oppression extérieure, se construire une organisation sociale et politique viable, et se défendre contre l'ennemi. Or c'est cela justement que les réactionnaires défaitistes ne peuvent pas faire. Ils parlent de la France du passé. Ils haïssent la France d'aujourd'hui - c'est-à-dire les Français d'aujourd'hui, parce que 90 % d'entre eux se refusent à écouter leurs vieilles rengaines, et ont définitivement brûlé ce qu'ils adorent encore. Les réactionnaires français ne croient pas à la France, parce qu'ils la détestent et s'en défient. C'est pourquoi ils l'ont trahie sans scrupule et livrée avec plaisir à l'ennemi. Cette prétention de limiter la notion de France à celle du passé c'est la négation même du patriotisme, c'est nier qu'il y ait encore une France.*¹⁴¹

Rist was targeting more the Paris collaborationists, who had abandoned the idea of France to seek favour from the German invaders and advance their own personal interests. He was reassured that the overwhelming majority still held onto the notion of France and believed that France still lived on. It was the people, therefore, that made the nation.

Other diarists, however, were less charitable in their opinion towards the general population. Bobkowski had observed in 1943 that opinion had really started to change only because Germany's repression had started to become intolerable rather than coming from any collective patriotic desire:

*Je n'ai encore jamais réussi à faire comprendre à un Français pourquoi nous ne collaborons pas, sauf à quelques-uns que je n'ai d'ailleurs convaincus qu'à moitié. Bien sûr, je parle de la vieille génération. Les jeunes, eux, commencent à réagir massivement. Je pourrais être méchant et dire que c'est parce que les Allemands commencent à marcher sur leurs pieds...*¹⁴²

Bobkowski was alluding to the growing numbers of young workers who had become disaffected with the *Service du Travail Obligatoire* (STO) and had evaded their obligations. Werth had observed sudden transformations in opinion as early as 1942 but he believed that this turnaround in opinion affected a far more general section of the population. This may well have been because young workers who rebelled against the introduction of the STO were infinitely more likely to have come from urban areas rather than rural areas such as Saint-Amour. The heavy emphasis on agriculture in Saint-Amour meant that contact with Germans was often profitable, which would have affected people's attitudes towards the Germans. Werth argued with a peasant over the proportion of people who supported the Germans:

¹⁴¹ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.404. (24.5.44)

¹⁴² Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.513 (22.8.43)

*Prenez les commerçants, me répond-il, il y en a bien la moitié qui sont pour les Boches. Ou du moins il y a quelques mois. Ça a quand même changé. Mais il faut comprendre que ce n'est pas des opinions, que ce n'est pas des hommes. C'est des girouettes. Ils regardent le balancier et ils sont du côté qui leur paraît le plus fort. Alors ils sont pour les Boches, pour ne pas avoir d'ennuis avec le gouvernement. Ce n'est pas des opinions, ce n'est pas des hommes.*¹⁴³

Werth may well have disputed the proportion but he very much agreed with the sentiment. He felt that too many were interested in best serving one's individual interests rather than those of the French nation. Yet how could anyone determine what was in the national interest in a time of such uncertainty?

People may have had different conceptions during the Occupation, particularly in the initial period, as to how to best serve France. De Gaulle, trying to calm things down in the National Assembly at the end of 1944, exclaimed: "*Il n'y a personne ici [...] qui n'ait servi la Patrie et la République, mais en 1940, on pouvait avoir des conceptions différents sur le service de la Patrie.*"¹⁴⁴ The implication is that things became clearer the longer the Occupation wore on. Certainly the increased repression of both the German Occupation force and Vichy after 1941 saw many abandon their allegiance to Vichy and the policy of collaboration. Yet very few of the diarists actually adjusted their behaviour to the changing climate. Duméril, for example, was convinced that close cooperation with the German military authorities was the best means of yielding the best possible outcome for both sides. At the end of 1943, Duméril was heartened to find again two men on both sides, who were capable of working together. On the French side: "*M. le Préfet Bonnefoy, profondément patriote, comprend l'importance capitale de la liaison avec l'occupant.*"¹⁴⁵ On the German side, Dr Bässler reminded Duméril of his excellent relations with Dr Hotz before he was killed in 1941:

*C'est un intellectuel, humain, réfléchi, nullement nazi. Il sait que son pays court à sa perte, il cherchera ainsi toujours à atténuer les ordres draconiens qu'il reçoit, et, si possible, à temporiser...*¹⁴⁶

Bässler would be, in Duméril's eyes, a buffer against the pro-Nazi *Feldkommandant*, who had been transferred from the Russian front. Although Duméril realised that the situation had changed, in that Germany's overall defeat seemed inevitable, he was convinced that his attitude should remain the same. Toesca's attitude towards his

¹⁴³ Werth, *Déposition*, p.376. (5.11.42)

¹⁴⁴ Galtier-Boissière, *Journal*, p.295. (28.12.44)

¹⁴⁵ Duméril, *Journal d'un honnête homme pendant l'occupation*, p.347. (23.9.43)

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

administrative work also remained the same: “*Mon métier: utiliser les ressources des instructions pour arracher aux Allemands les Français.*”¹⁴⁷ Toesca had a far more cynical view of relations between the French administration and the German military authorities yet, like Duméril, he never wavered in his appreciation of the value of his work. Toesca was aware, however, that the closer the time came to the Liberation, the more likely his work would be perceived as treasonous.¹⁴⁸ In 1940, those people who had abandoned their administrative posts were perceived as traitors but in 1944 their decision was more likely to be seen as patriotic. Toesca did not want to work in the Ministry of Interior so close to the end but at the same time he did not want to give the appearance of joining *les résistants de la dernière heure*.¹⁴⁹

History from above, with its benefit of hindsight, can sometimes be disadvantaged. Post-Liberation France tended to portray Resistance fighters as heroes and patriots. This may well have been the case in the context of 1944 yet the danger is to think that this is applicable to the whole of the Occupation period. Most of the Resistance ranks were swelled near the end of the Occupation. For example, many young workers trying to avoid the compulsory drafting of the STO joined the *maquis*. It was believed at the Liberation that the workers had formed the bulk of the Resistance. Mauriac wrote that the working class alone had been faithful to the profaned *patrie*.¹⁵⁰ Certainly by 1944, workers were over-represented in the Resistance but this had not been the case for the first two years of the Occupation where there was no organised Resistance movement. During this period, the workers were often described as the most apathetic and passive section of the population. All reports suggested that they had no sympathy for Vichy but remained quiescent because of their fear of unemployment and the difficulties of survival with the rising of prices and the blocking of wages. Moreover, the majority of the French population held a mistrustful, even cynical view of the Resistance right up until the end of the Occupation.¹⁵¹ Gildea takes the example of the villagers of Maillé, in Touraine, where

¹⁴⁷ Toesca, *Cinq ans de patience*, p.297. (19.7.44)

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.220. (15.3.44) Not that this was the case. For example, Toesca was officially warned not to reveal confidential information about Gestapo prisoners. He was advised to do it in a more discreet fashion.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.312. (30.7.44)

¹⁵⁰ Jackson, *The dark years*, p.296.

¹⁵¹ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, pp.402-403. (25.3.44) But see Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy*, p.305. Whilst it would be naïve to think that some Resistance activities did not provoke some anger it would also be naïve to think that German reprisals always caused hatred towards the Resistance. A report from Jean Cassou stated: *Lorsqu'on a eu l'occasion de visiter un village pillé et incendié par les Allemands, on ne recueille de la part de la population pas un seul mot de*

a maquisard attack had provoked German brutality. A German unit torched the village and massacred 126 of the 627 inhabitants. Those who survived the massacre were torn between anger and despair. The survivors were ambivalent about the Resistance, as they redeemed France, but at the same time they had brought tragedy to them.¹⁵²

Furthermore, it would be wrong to think that one could be only patriotic by fighting in the Resistance. One must get away from the black and white notions of resistance and collaboration, of good and evil. Although the French police were involved in shameful actions such as the *rafles* of 1941-1942, there were times when they turned a blind eye to defiance of German authority. Bobkowski had experienced numerous times officers turning a blind eye to false papers, which saved many Jews from being deported.¹⁵³ This is what at times Werth had difficulty in viewing from his isolated, rural world: “*Les «terroristes» sont-ils la France? Si on répond: «non», il n’y a plus rien qu’une masse petite-bourgeoise qui attend que les Anglais, les Américains, les Russes ou n’importe qui lui rendent les bonheurs du ventre et la liberté du confort.*”¹⁵⁴ His view was tainted by the ostensibly selfish inhabitants of Saint-Amour and the sparsity of human contact. Yet there were times when Werth encountered a sign of hope, which made him reflect that things were not as bad as they often seemed. This cynicism came from his lack of exposure to defiant acts. The inhabitants of Saint-Amour were relatively well off in terms of provisions and they did not have to experience the German occupation until the end of 1942. There were no large-scale demonstrations or any acts of collective defiance. It was infinitely more difficult to fight for something when you had more to lose:

*Je crois que Laurent est toujours prêt (comme il le disait, il y a deux mois) à donner, contre la victoire anglaise apportée sur un plateau, une de ses vaches, la moins bonne. Mais il réprouve le sabotage des voies ferrées. (On a, ces derniers jours, fait dérailler un train à Sainte-Croix.) «Qui risque d’aller en prison? Dit-il, c’est ceux qui gardent les voies. Si j’en voyais un qui veuille faire dérailler un train, je l’en empêcherais à coups de gourdin. Je n’ai pas d’envie d’aller en prison, ni d’être fusillé. Quant à me sauver, à prendre le maquis, j’ai autre chose à faire, j’ai mon travail...»*¹⁵⁵

récrimination contre le maquis et la résistance. On se trouve en présence d’une sorte d’acceptation farouche.

¹⁵² Gildea, *Marianne in chains*, pp.395-397.

¹⁵³ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.477. (26.7.43) See also Galtier-Boissière, *Journal*, p.73. (5.11.41)

¹⁵⁴ Werth, *Déposition*, p.612 (16.4.44)

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.499. (21.7.43)

The diarists living in Paris, on the other hand, where life was much harsher and the number of inhabitants was far greater, were witness to many more incidents of collective defiance. These acts may have been on a small scale but they, nevertheless, showed a collective spirit and a sign that the idea of France had not been snuffed out by the German Occupation. The French flag was forbidden under the Occupation but Toesca noted the Parisian population's readiness to defy this law: "*Le patriotisme se porte beaucoup cette année dans les cravates. Au théâtre aussi les acteurs recherchent le tricolore... On finit par ne plus être arrêté par ce bleu-blanc-rouge à force d'en voir.*"¹⁵⁶ Even Jünger was aware that there was a definite resentment of the German presence in Paris: "*Sur les murs des maisons de Paris, on peut voir fréquemment la date de «1918», écrite à la craie. Et aussi: «Stalingrad». Qui sait s'ils n'y sont pas vaincus, en même temps que nous?*"¹⁵⁷

The ambiguity of the period, therefore, must not be discounted. Just as there were different ways of serving the French nation, so too were there different ways of betraying it. The moral universe of Occupied France was notoriously murky. The problem was that it was difficult to decide whose actions were honourable at any one given time. It was a matter of perspective, but those actions would eventually come to be judged after the Liberation within the context of 1944, as opposed to within the context of the time in which those actions were performed. Rist, for example, talking to the nephew of the Governor General of Belgium, Falkenhausen, raised the case of a woman who was on trial for harbouring a shot-down Polish pilot:

*«Ce qu'il y a affreux dans la guerre, c'est que les mêmes actes qui paraissent criminels aux uns sont considérés par les autres comme héroïques», il m'a dit: «Oui, vous avez raison, - et sans doute si j'avais été à la place de cette femme, j'aurais fait la même chose.»*¹⁵⁸

This woman's actions would undoubtedly be perceived as heroic in the context of liberated France yet officially her actions were considered patriotic in 1942. Those who fought in the Resistance were often labelled as terrorists and those who worked for Vichy may have thought that they were working for the best interests of France. Guéhenno observed how the *maquis*, in an effort to combat the mistrust of the majority of the nation, stressed in their underground newspapers that they were not

¹⁵⁶ Toesca, *Cinq ans de patience*, p.146. (10.12.42) See also Jackson, p.439. The second half of 1942 would see for the first time the growing disaffection from Vichy translate into collective action. Two-thirds of the sixty-six demonstrations that took place occurred in the South, with crowds numbering fifteen thousand in Lyons and Marseilles.

¹⁵⁷ Jünger, *Second journal parisien*, (Paris: Christian Bourgois Editeur, 1980) p.9. (21.2.43)

¹⁵⁸ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.268. (25.8.42)

terrorists as they were portrayed by Vichy propaganda. They endeavoured to convey the notion that “*l’ordre n’est pas nécessairement identique à la légalité*” and that the *milice* were labelled the “*forces du maintien de l’ordre*” so that they might appeal to the bourgeoisie, who merely wanted their security preserved.¹⁵⁹ Matters were complicated by the fact that there was not just one *patrie* but two or three. The French might have been loyal to Vichy, as it was the legitimate government, but also loyal to de Gaulle and the Free French on the grounds that the Vichy leaders were traitors.¹⁶⁰

It took time for many French to realise that those who officially represented France did not necessarily speak for France. Werth came upon a passage, written by Xavier de Maistre in 1795, one month after the entire occupation of France:

*Le gouvernement est-il bon? La patrie est dans toute sa force; devient-il vicieux? La patrie est malade; change-t-il? Elle meurt. C’est alors une nouvelle patrie et chacun est le maître de l’adopter ou d’en choisir une autre.*¹⁶¹

The question became much more relevant after 1942 whether it was treasonous to betray the will of Vichy as it appeared that Germany would be defeated. The problem was that it would take another two years for any betrayal to be vindicated or to see if the adopted or chosen *nouvelle patrie* would be condoned. Werth realised that there were many who believed that they had acted patriotically in the early years of the Occupation but who had come to realise that their position was no longer tenable with the changing nature of Vichy: “*Il y a beaucoup de nuances entre les traîtres qui se veulent traîtres et ceux que la trahison entraîna avant qu’ils aient reconnu son visage.*”¹⁶² Those who openly collaborated were a distinct minority but Werth believed that there were far more who had betrayed the French nation in a less overt fashion:

*Et les collaborateurs? J’entends non pas ceux qui ont publiquement trahi, mais ceux qui ont trahi en désir et en pensée, ou les pauvres idiots qui, jusqu’à la fin, balbutièrent la légende du maréchal? Sans doute ils disparaîtront dans la masse. Mais en quelles régions de cette masse? Et leurs toxines s’y résorberont-elles?*¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, pp.401-402. (25.3.44) See also Werth, *Déposition*, p.612 *Les «terroristes» sont-ils la France? Si on répond: «non», il n’y a plus rien qu’une masse petite-bourgeoise qui attend que les Anglais, les Américains, les Russes ou n’importe qui lui rendent les bonheurs du ventre et la liberté du confort.* (16.4.44)

¹⁶⁰ Gildea, *Marianne in chains*, pp.16-17.

¹⁶¹ Werth, *Déposition*, p.401. (11.12.42)

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p.460. (19.4.43)

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.642. (17.5.44) See also pp.480-1 Werth met someone who worked in Vichy. He was not a fully-fledged collaborator and had admirable qualities but Werth was still critical: *Toutes les idées qui sont assez légères pour qu’on puisse les tenir entre deux doigts, il les saisit. Celles qui sont plus*

It worried Werth that these people would go unpunished and that they might eventually come to betray the French nation once again in a similar period of upheaval.

Even those who had openly betrayed France might have acted out of noble intentions or at least shared similar beliefs to those who had refused to compromise their French identity. Pierre Laval is the obvious example whose actions have been interpreted by some as honourable.¹⁶⁴ The notable example out of the selected diarists is Pierre Drieu La Rochelle. He openly admitted:

*je ne tenais nullement à la France... Pourtant j'ai eu des bouffées de passion patriotique. Sans quoi je n'aurais pas été collabo car je l'ai été avant tout pour tirer quelque chose des Allemands pour la France. Sans quoi, je ne les aurais admirés, préférés que de loin. Doriotiste, aussi par patriotisme. Non communiste par réaction «patriotique», autant que bourgeoise en 1934.*¹⁶⁵

The Paris collaborationists may have felt that they were acting in the best interests of France by quelling the Communist threat and ridding France of its internal enemies. Jünger, for whom interestingly Paris became a spiritual *patrie*, lamented the fact that Drieu had killed himself:

*Il semble qu'en vertu de quelque loi, ceux qui avaient des motifs nobles de cultiver l'amitié entre les peuples tombent sans rémission, tandis que les bas profiteurs s'en tirent. Montherlant, dit-on, est également poursuivi. Il s'imaginait encore que l'amitié chevaleresque fût possible; les lèches-bottes lui montrent maintenant qu'il n'en est rien.*¹⁶⁶

Jünger was clearly targeting the Paris collaborationists, such as Doriot, who craved political power. They were merely interested in pursuing their own interests whereas Jünger believed that Drieu was sincere in his desire for the creation of a strong, unified Europe. Drieu's attraction to Germany, in Jünger's eyes, was not a betrayal of France but, rather, an honest attempt to create a positive partnership between the two countries. In that respect, his attitude can be seen as similar to that of Duméril. The only difference was that Drieu could not envisage the restoration of France.¹⁶⁷

Drieu was far from being the only diarist to lament upon the national disintegration of France. Drieu's antidote for this national disintegration may well

lourdes, il les laisse tomber. (29.5.43) He blocked out all the negative aspects of Vichy so that he could still shelter within: *Il ne se fait point d'illusions sur Vichy. Mais il se réfugie en Vichy, qui est non seulement son pain quotidien, mais aussi son opium. Vichy lui est reposant comme un film absurde.* It was not a question of him not knowing the atrocities which had been going on but, rather, that he chose to ignore them.

¹⁶⁴ See René de Chambrun's *Mes combats pour Pierre Laval*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1990).

¹⁶⁵ Drieu, *Journal*, pp.394-395. (June 1944)

¹⁶⁶ Jünger, *Second journal parisien*, p.325. (7.9.44)

¹⁶⁷ Drieu, *Journal*, p.333. (3.3.43)

have been extreme but his belief that France's national identity had been eroded was certainly a commonly held view: "*La défaite de la France? La corruption, la décadence; les Français, pendant cette guerre, auront tout été: communistes, socialistes, pacifistes, anarchistes, tout sauf des Français.*"¹⁶⁸ Diarists such as Werth and Guéhenno may well have differed in their beliefs on how to combat this national disintegration but they, nevertheless, shared the view that France had been reduced from a national community to small, competing groups of like-minded individuals. Werth would go so far as to entertain whether notions such as *la patrie* or *le peuple* were simply invented by historians: "*La France est en tronçons [...] Le peuple la réinventera-t-il? La bourgeoisie n'est plus capable de penser la France. L'idée de France est devenue une idée difficile. Le peuple l'éclaircira-t-elle? Mais le peuple existe encore?*"¹⁶⁹ Werth oscillated much more in his opinion of *le peuple*. The apathy and indifference shown by many of the inhabitants of Saint-Amour tainted his overall image of the *peuple*. The people of Saint-Amour did not resemble in any way the people Werth was used to interacting with in Paris, and he often made clear that he felt uncomfortable in their presence.¹⁷⁰ One gets the feeling that Werth's unease with his situation affected his perception of the people of Saint-Amour, which, in turn, tainted his view of France irrevocably. Vichy played on these divisions and feelings of national disintegration. It offered the illusion to the French people that it could finally assure after years of frustration, to use the expression of François Bédarida, "*l'impossible symbiose du national et du social.*"¹⁷¹ Although the *France du maréchal* would also come to be occupied and the popularity of Pétain would diminish in the South, the idea of France would continue to be *une idée difficile* throughout the Occupation. This France of divisions would continue to be pulled at from different directions by competing factions. Werth wondered how all these *tronçons* could form a whole again but again the fundamental difference with Drieu was that he had hope that this indeed would happen.

Guéhenno was more optimistic than Werth that the idea of France could again be shared by its citizens. Where he differed from Werth was in his view that the

¹⁶⁸ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.372. (14.10.42) See also Werth, *Déposition*, p.150. (1.3.41)

¹⁶⁹ Werth, *Déposition*, p.150. (1.3.41)

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.409. (29.12.42)

¹⁷¹ Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy*, pp.200-201. See Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*, p.20: Pétain informed the French people, on June 25, 1940, of a building of a *France neuve: le gouvernement reste libre, la France ne sera administrée que par des Français.*

breakdown in national fraternity had been as a result of the circumstances of the Occupation:

*Il n'y a plus de France, il n'y a que des Français isolés sans presque aucunes relations l'un avec l'autre que des relations secrètes, dangereuses et interdites, et cela même rendra bien difficile dans les années à venir tout jugement général sur ce pays. Chaque Français, sans aucun secours, sans rien qui l'inspire, confiné dans sa prison, ne vaut plus que ce qu'il valait tout seul. Et, il est vrai, certains se sont habitués à la servitude, déjà si longue, si ancienne et ils attendent la fin, n'importe quelle fin. Mais innombrables aussi ceux qui veillent, et je ne finirais pas de noter ici les noms et les aventures de ceux que je connais s'il n'y avait à cela pour eux aucun péril. Car nous en sommes là que je puis bien noter ici, sans compromettre personne, toutes nos hontes, mais il me faut garder pour moi, dans ma seule mémoire, jusqu'aux noms de ceux qui, dans le silence et le secret, sauvent l'honneur.*¹⁷²

Guéhenno raises an important point with respect to what the diarists chose to record. The Occupation had effectively closed off relations with other French citizens on a national level. Each individual was confined to a cell, which deprived the French of a collective voice. Guéhenno was well aware of those people who had broken their silence to betray themselves as well as their country but he was adamant that there were just as many who had strived to save France's honour. Others had accepted the presence of the German captors too freely but Guéhenno remained, nevertheless, optimistic that this had more to do with the lengthy duration of the Occupation, and that there were sufficient numbers who refused to accept their servitude. Guéhenno was very similar to Werth in his belief that the idea of France had been sacrificed to the preoccupation with personal survival. The deportations became even more numerous and Guéhenno wondered why the whole of France did not rebel and not just a few courageous people. He had a good deal of respect for *le peuple* but at the same time he felt a little disappointed in their lack of revolutionary spirit. He felt that most of the young people being deported were resigned to going:

*Beaucoup parlent déjà des difficultés qu'ils créeraient à leurs parents, s'ils s'enfuyaient... La faute n'en est à personne et à tout le monde, à la lâcheté commune: il est de plus en plus difficile à qui le voudrait de se cacher. Les épreuves, les souffrances de ceux qui sont déjà partis obligent ceux qui ne sont pas partis encore.*¹⁷³

¹⁷² Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.365. (13.11.43) See also Deharme, *Les années perdues*, p.180: *Je me replonge dans Chateaubriand pour me consoler: «Quand la liberté a disparu, il reste un pays, mais il n'y a plus de patrie», me dit-il.* (14.4.44)

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.344. (12.6.43)

At times one feels that some diarists' expectations were too high. Historically *le peuple* had been the most active group in bringing about change, and it seems that at times this group was unfairly blamed for the general lack of revolutionary spirit. Yet there was a heavy price to pay for defying the German presence in France. Alsace-Lorraine, for example, underwent a total transformation into a German province. Those who tried to escape the compulsory Wehrmacht service had reprisals exacted on their families.¹⁷⁴ The reprisals after Resistance activity go some way also to explaining the resentment their activities sometimes inspired. Guéhenno could not see why the workers who were brave enough to hide away should be punished by those who had abided by German orders, yet he did not have to deal with the consequences of their evasion. In this respect, Werth appears to be more reasonable in his opinion of the workers:

*Brun, le menuisier, part après-demain pour la Carinthie. Il est triste et plein de colère. Je ne puis m'empêcher d'être dur. «Les ouvriers français n'ont pas bronché, tant qu'il s'est agi de fabriquer, en France, des armes pour l'Allemagne; ils n'ont commencé à résister ou gémir que du jour où l'on les a contraints à les fabriquer en Allemagne même. C'est la passivité des ouvriers qui a permis à Hitler et à Laval, opérant progressivement, d'obtenir quelque deux cent mille départs. Du moins c'est le chiffre qui circule.» Je suis injuste sans doute et je suppose les ouvriers détenteurs d'un immuable pouvoir révolutionnaire dont ils pourraient user, à leur caprice, en toute circonstance.*¹⁷⁵

He even recorded with pride an incident of open defiance by some drafted workers. Trains, taking about six hundred young workers to Germany, were sabotaged and the passengers sang the *Marseillaise* and the *Internationale* and cried: «*Vive de Gaulle! Laval au poteau!*». It was clear that Werth was ultimately hoping for such events to broaden out onto a national scale: “*Est-ce une étincelle unique? Y a-t-il beaucoup d'étincelles semblables? Allumeront-elles un foyer?*”¹⁷⁶

There was an expectation for change to be carried out from below but it should never be forgotten that the leaders who represented France shaped the behaviour of the French people. Although Vichy spoke officially for all of France, the German military authorities effectively had complete control of the Occupied Zone, and all of France after November 1942. The German occupation created a void in the French nation, which, to a large extent, Pétain attempted to fill. He was a barrier to

¹⁷⁴ Jackson, *The dark years*, pp.246-248.

¹⁷⁵ Werth, *Déposition*, p.440. (3.3.43)

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.445-446. (23.3.43)

the erosion of national authority caused by the German occupation. Pétain, therefore, embodied the idea of France. Yet the fact that Vichy never gained any widespread support would suggest that there were limits to the lengths the French people would go to follow Pétain. The longer the Occupation went on and the more the general situation deteriorated, the more likely that initial goodwill would fade:

«Le pays doit savoir que nous avons été battus. J'ai passé trois mois à le dire autour de moi et depuis deux ans je me le répète à moi-même tous les matins.» Le «glorieux soldat de Verdun» se livre là tout entier: un maniaque de la capitulation, un masochiste de la défaite.¹⁷⁷

The prefect of Rodez wrote openly in September 1942: “*La majorité de la population continue à vénérer le Maréchal mais elle le suit moins en tant que Chef, qu'en tant que personne de légende, magnifique vieillard aux dons, aux vertus étonnantes.*”¹⁷⁸

Guéhenno noted that Pétain's speeches became shorter and much more vain and pompous after the entire occupation of France. Pétain even proudly declared that he had more powers than Louis XIV: “*Vous n'avez qu'un devoir: obéir, nous a-t-il dit ce soir. Vous n'avez qu'une seule patrie que j'incarne: la France.*”¹⁷⁹

What these words suggest is that the defeat of France had also seen the demise of the French *patrie*. The French nation was no longer in existence but Pétain, as opposed to Vichy, claimed that he embodied the spirit of France. To serve him, and him alone, was to serve the French nation. Consenting to Pétain's wishes and the implication that to do so was ‘French’ is essential in understanding the public support for *maréchalisme*.¹⁸⁰ By that same logic, to serve de Gaulle was to betray *la patrie*:

*Etre pour de Gaulle, conclut Béraud, c'est refuser son cœur au Maréchal, c'est désespérer du salut de la patrie. Etre pour de Gaulle, c'est préférer au vainqueur de Verdun, le fuyard de Bordeaux. Etre pour de Gaulle, c'est prendre contre le sauveur le parti du traître.*¹⁸¹

That such an attitude could still be held in 1943, when Germany's fortunes had well and truly taken a turn for the worse with their capitulation at Stalingrad, illustrates how Vichy propaganda had made an impact during its formative years, and goes some way to explaining the residual support for Pétain when Germany's fate

¹⁷⁷ Galtier-Boissière, *Journal*, p.100. (29.5.42)

¹⁷⁸ Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy*, p.257. See also Jackson, *The dark years*, pp.280-281.

¹⁷⁹ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.302. (21.11.42) See also Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande*, p.170. This speech came on 19 November, 1942 to assure the French people that nothing had changed with the complete occupation of France: *Je reste votre guide. Vous n'avez qu'un seul devoir: obéir. Vous n'avez qu'un seul gouvernement: celui à qui j'ai donné le pouvoir de gouverner. Vous n'avez qu'une patrie que j'incarne: la France.*

¹⁸⁰ Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy*, p.234.

¹⁸¹ Galtier-Boissière, *Journal*, p.142. (13.3.43)

appeared sealed.¹⁸² Pétain, therefore, was more than just a leader. His leadership was presented as the only honourable option. He represented a model of behaviour, namely one of steadfastness and honour. To reject him was not only a betrayal of Pétain the leader but also Pétain the protector of the nation. He assumed a mythical significance well beyond his actual practical functions.

De Gaulle would come to assume a similar position. It took much longer, however, for the French people to associate the idea of France with de Gaulle. There were several reasons for this. Firstly, General de Gaulle was perceived initially as belonging to the military personnel who had betrayed France whereas Pétain's military legacy represented someone who had saved France. Secondly, he did not have a physical presence in France. His voice could be heard on *la radio anglaise* but there were no portraits of him displayed in provincial shop windows. Pétain's physical presence was less relevant in the Occupied Zone but at least he was seen not to have abandoned France. De Gaulle was initially simply a voice, and it took time for the French people to realise that that voice spoke for France. Werth would observe near the end of the Occupation that de Gaulle had assumed a similar position to Pétain at the beginning of the Occupation. It was not so much the individual, de Gaulle, whom people increasingly began to follow but, rather, what he represented:

*On entend partout le mot: gaulliste. On entend moins souvent le nom de de Gaulle. Il y a contraste entre l'immense rôle historique, qui fut, qui est le sien et on ne sait quel effacement de son personnage. Il a parlé, quand tout se taisait, quand tous se taisaient ou parlaient lâchement. Il a agi, quand tous renonçaient. Il a fait rentrer dans l'histoire la France, qui en était expulsée. Mais on ne lui a pas fabriqué, il ne s'est pas fabriqué de légende. Il ne rend pas la justice sous un chêne. Il ne pince pas l'oreille des engagés volontaires.*¹⁸³

In the beginning, de Gaulle's voice was propagated by Vichy as being a voice of dissidence. His association with London was ill-received in a period of brief Anglophobia after such incidents as Mers-el-Kébir. It took time to reveal that England was acting in France's best interests and for Germany to reveal its true intentions. It should be no surprise that de Gaulle's growing popularity coincided with a growing resentment amongst the French people of Germany's presence in France and Vichy's ill-advised association with the unwanted invader. Werth argued that de Gaulle was different from Pétain and Hitler in that his spirit of defiance was

¹⁸² See Toesca, *Cinq ans de patience*, pp.235-253. Pétain's visit to Paris, in April 1944, still managed to attract a significant crowd.

¹⁸³ Werth, *Déposition*, p.571. (13.2.44)

not a myth born out of propaganda but a true reflection of his actions. Yet de Gaulle, acting in exile, was himself far less a tangible force than what his defiance represented to the French people.

The most significant aspect to take out of this is how *quarante millions de Pétainistes* could suddenly become *quarante millions de gaullistes*. Historians, such as Paxton, have claimed that this sudden transformation was simply a reflection of the changing state of Germany's fortunes, and the realisation by the French people that the de Gaulle camp would be victorious and that siding with the losing camp would have serious repercussions.¹⁸⁴ There is evidence in the diaries to support this claim. Galtier-Boissière recorded the indignant reaction of a mother whose daughter's head had been shaven: "*Si elle a couché avec les Allemands, c'est qu'elle avait dix-sept ans, monsieur, comprenez-vous? Mais pourquoi lui avoir coupé les cheveux, c'est une honte, monsieur! Elle était prête à coucher aussi bien avec les Américains!*"¹⁸⁵ There was a natural instinct to side with the victors. Many 'horizontal collaborators' were punished after the Liberation as they were a potent symbol of what had happened to France. Yet Werth found more disturbing those people who managed to escape punishment: A woman, who had been a sworn patriot, remarked after the defeat of 1940:

«Il ne faut pas oublier que nous sommes vaincus.» Et, comme on dit: Je ne me sens pas le courage d'enlever aux vieilles femmes la foi qui les console, elle dit aussi: «Vous avez foi dans l'Angleterre, je ne veux pas vous enlever vos illusions.» Et elle dit aussi: «La France est pourrie; l'Allemagne, peuple jeune, peut la régénérer.» Aujourd'hui, elle est gaulliste, gaulliste fervente. Mais elle ne cacherait pas cinq minutes d'horloge un parachutiste anglais. Bat... a oublié qu'après la débâcle il disait: «Que l'Europe soit faite par l'Allemagne ou par un autre peuple, qu'importe... Moi, je préfère Gæthe à Shakespeare et les Anglais n'ont ni philosophes ni musiciens.» Il l'a oublié complètement. Et, si l'on le lui rappelait, il le nierait de bonne foi. La mémoire est une étrange faculté.»¹⁸⁶

Werth remarked how these people, who had previously been patriots, were so easily caught up in Vichy propaganda. The woman's comments are a mirror image of Pétain's words. With the realisation that Pétain was no longer in any dominant position of power, she became *gaulliste*, even though her claims were hollow. The

¹⁸⁴ Paxton, *Old guard and new order*, pp.234-235.

¹⁸⁵ Galtier-Boissière, *Journal*, p.207. (22.8.44) See also Moret, *Journal d'une mauvaise Française*, pp.237-238. (9.9.44)

¹⁸⁶ Werth, *Déposition*, pp.570-571. (10.2.44)

man's denial that he had ever supported Germany's designs for creating a unified Europe illustrates how people could switch sides so easily.

Yet the problem becomes more complex if one entertains the notion that the forty million supporters of Pétain or de Gaulle were more supporters of the ideals embodied by those two men rather than supporters of the men themselves. In that sense, there was no real change between 1940 and 1944. The French had been supporters of honour and defiance not only in 1940 but also in 1944. What had changed was the people who embodied those ideals rather than the French people's commitment to those ideals. Guéhenno acknowledged the ever-pressing desire to get through the war at all costs but, unlike Werth, he felt that the overwhelming majority had not compromised their values:

*On se méfie de tous, Allemands, Anglais ou Russes, et on ne pense qu'à «passer au travers» sans dommage, comme si la grande masse de ce pays ne tenait plus rien qu'à vivre, à n'importe quel prix. Mais quel peuple vit autrement qu'une minorité, par quelques-uns qui l'inspirent, le mènent? Cette minorité est maintenant contrainte au silence. Ne parlent que des traîtres et les lâches. De là cette impression de mollesse que donne l'opinion. Mais, au juste, il n'y a pas d'opinion, et, si l'on y songe, l'espèce d'inertie qu'oppose à la propagande la masse d'ordinaire si malléable est un bon signe de la dignité instinctive du pays.*¹⁸⁷

The sudden switch in support for de Gaulle from support for Pétain can be seen, therefore, in a positive light. Just as the French distinguished between Pétain and Vichy, so too can they be seen to have distinguished de Gaulle from the Free French or the Allies.

It is important to further explore the reasons for Pétain's residual popularity. Firstly, Laval did not enjoy the legacy of the *glorieux soldat de Verdun*. Pétain could be seen as a saviour figure and a protector of the French people, as he had already proven that he could stand up to the Germans. In a time of defeat and humiliation, Pétain was a symbol of honour and defiance. It made sense that he would endeavour to protect and best serve France's interests as he had done at Verdun. To serve Pétain, therefore, was to be complicit in that role of defiance. In this respect, the widespread support for Pétain could be seen, at least initially, as patriotic. Laval, on the other hand, had no such past on which to rely. Consequently, his actions were much more likely to be interpreted as those of an opportunist rather than those of a man trying to protect France:

¹⁸⁷ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.406. (30.4.44)

*cet homme incapable de sentir à la française ramasse dans son cerveau des idées qu'un Français n'aurait jamais eues: pour lui c'est la guerre en soi qui est mauvaise, peu n'importe pour quelle cause ou contre quel ennemi; tous les moyens sont donc bons pour l'éviter; c'est l'Allemagne qui est la plus dangereuse, donc aidons-la. C'est bas. Mais c'est en même temps d'une absence inouïe de clairvoyance. Car il est le seul à ne pas voir que la partie est en train d'être perdue par l'Allemagne, et que lui-même ne survivra pas au déshonneur des propos qu'il tient.*¹⁸⁸

The notion of Pétain's *double jeu* is testimony to the fact that his actions were interpreted far more favourably than those of Laval. The notion of Pétain serving as a shield for the French people against the Germans could not possibly apply to Laval, who had openly wished for a German victory. Laval's unwavering commitment to collaboration led to his downfall at the end of 1940 yet his submissiveness, in the context of the period after 1942, when defeat for Germany increasingly appeared inevitable, was not only incomprehensible but also unforgivable.

The longer the Occupation went on, however, the more increasingly difficult it became for Pétain to maintain the distinction between himself and the repressive policies of Vichy represented by Laval. The legend of the Father of the French nation, for example, was only possible if Pétain was absolved of responsibility for the actions of Vichy. This was perhaps less vital in the context of 1940 when collaboration was still a benign policy but in the context of 1943, when the *Milice* came into force and with the introduction of the STO, Pétain's complicity became increasingly impossible to refute. The *danger bolcheviste* was no longer a large enough threat to offset the resentment of Vichy openly working for Germany. A report in April 1943 stated: "*le pourcentage des anticollaborationnistes dépasse 90%, leur nombre tend à faire bloc, à se souder, à se cimenter même.*"¹⁸⁹ One of Vichy's founding principles, the protectorate role, was completely undermined. 1944 saw not only a separation of popular opinion from Vichy but also the perception that Vichy was a separation from France. Werth observed how the French people increasingly began to disassociate themselves from Pétain and what he stood for: "*Pétain aurait dit: «Il faut à la France une défaite.» Une défaite pour la sauver du Front populaire et du gâchis démocratique. A-t-il dit cela? Ou bien une légende du traître Pétain se substitue-t-*

¹⁸⁸ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.284. (23.10.42) Compare with Galtier-Boissière, *Journal*, p.130 *Et il y a encore des maréchalistes pour prétendre que Pétain joue un double jeu et négocie avec l'Amérique tout en collaborant avec Hitler «dans l'honneur» et «en toute loyauté!»*. (14.12.42)

¹⁸⁹ Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy*, pp.284-286.

elle à la légende du père de la Patrie?”¹⁹⁰ Pétain’s promise of no more lies made sense in the context of 1940, when the French needed to come to terms with their defeat, yet as the Occupation wore on, the notion that the defeat had ultimately been a positive thing for France made no sense in such a repressive climate. Even Drieu, who had welcomed in 1940 the opportunity to rid France of its decadence, realised that the Vichy leaders represented the very things they claimed they were fighting against:

*Ce vieux con de maréchal, ce salaud de Laval réagissent comme ils sont aux événements. J’ai toujours méprisé ce général passif, ce défenseur de Verdun purement négatif. Cette vieille bourrique du juste milieu... Il va bien flanqué de Laval, ce gnôme hideux issu de tout l’ignoble rêve d’enrichissement du prolétariat français.*¹⁹¹

It is clear that Drieu reserved his special contempt for Laval. Yet few diarists were willing to go that one step further and brand collectively Pétain and Laval as traitors:

*Que de fois nous avons dit, parlant de Pétain ou de Laval: «Ce n’est pas si simple que ça. Ils n’ont pas trahi comme on trahit au Cinéma.» Notre sens critique, notre volonté de juste critique, notre sentiment de la complexité, notre obsession plutôt de la complexité, notre peur enfin d’être «primaire» nous ont trompés. La cauteleuse brutalité de Laval, la cynique hypocrisie du sinistre vieillard, ce n’est pas si compliqué que ça. C’est comme au Cinéma.*¹⁹²

This reluctance to link Pétain to Laval’s treachery indicates that Pétain’s character, as opposed to the man himself, and the part he played in Vichy, had a lasting effect on the French people. It took time for the realisation to occur that Pétain had betrayed France. The policy of collaboration was roundly rejected by the French people but it took time for Pétain to be implicated in that policy. It was difficult to think that someone in whom they had placed their trust had turned out to have betrayed them. However, that might well explain why there appeared to be such a sudden shift away from Pétain to de Gaulle.

It is important to look beyond the dramatic events of the Occupation and ‘big’ issues that surrounded the period. They certainly played a significant role in shaping opinion but one must not look past the impact that the everyday problems had on the lives of the diarists who endured the Occupation on a day to day basis. It would be these problems that would constantly weigh on their minds and shape their view of the world. Werth was an exceptional case in that he could not, and did not have to,

¹⁹⁰ Werth, *Déposition*, p.492. (2.7.43)

¹⁹¹ Drieu, *Journal*, p.303 (8.11.42)

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p.450. (30.3.43) See also Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.354. (9.9.43)

work during the Occupation. His position of relative ease and solitude in Saint-Amour afforded him a vision of the world around him that was not blinded by other distractions. Some diarists, such as Roussin and Cocteau, blocked out the war by focusing their attention on their work. The majority would continue to work throughout the Occupation. Those like Rist and Duméril would keep themselves very busy but they were fortunate in that their work would never be in the public eye. What one did as an occupation would not be the only thing by which one was judged after, and indeed during, the Occupation period. One's public image could play a significant part in the collective spirit of the French people. This must be distinguished from the private world of each individual. Putting on a visibly upbeat front was just as important as accentuating the positive aspects of life during the Occupation. It was a means of overcoming the weight of individual concerns that centred on survival. At one time or another, food became an obsession for every diarist. The quest for food could often get in the way of more noble concerns, which might help explain why there were so very few actively involved in the evolution of the Occupation. It might also be explained by an instinctive willingness to follow successively the patriotic ideals embodied by two otherwise vastly different leaders. The dichotomic axes of collaboration and resistance required active participation but the diarists observed that there was much greater flexibility within the infinitely broader grey zone of *accommodation*.

The end?

At its inception, this thesis posited as its primary objective the delineation of a comprehensive representation of life during the Occupation at the individual level. In order for such a representation to be fully realised, some reference to the conclusions of the personal narratives examined in this thesis is required. From an historical perspective, the signing of the armistice on June 22 1940 and the Liberation of Paris on August 25 1944 are the two defining temporal parameters of the Occupation period. The diarists, however, were much less clear in their starting-points and end-points. Each diarist would have a different motivation for writing but the fact that the majority continued to write beyond the Liberation period suggests that their writing journey was incomplete.

It should come as no surprise that the testimonies of the diarists that have been privileged in this thesis manifest a narrative conclusion in the true sense of the word.¹⁹³ They conclude with a positive and definitive image of liberation, evoking the restoration of freedom and the realisation of a longed-for end. The reader of Bobkowski's diary, for example, is left with the clear impression that the Occupation period was brought to a close with the arrival of the American forces:

*J'ai l'impression de rêver, mais je ne rêve pas. Il en arrive continuellement. Chemises vertes, pantalons verts et guêtres vertes. Ce sont enfin les autres. Ceux qu'on a attendus pendant de si longues années; cette fois, ce sont bien eux. A peine trois mois après avoir débarqué, ils sont à Paris. Ils sont superbes. C'est un autre monde qui entre dans Paris, c'est la liberté.*¹⁹⁴

Bobkowski would later admit to feeling regret over the fact that his native Poland would not be in such a fortunate position as France in terms of being able to restore itself to the position it held before the war. Yet the sense of palpable relief that freedom had finally been restored to France is unmistakeable. There is, furthermore, an overwhelming sense of resolution, which marks the terminus of his authorial odyssey. The closing line of Guéhenno's diary also unambiguously closes the chapter of his Occupation experience: "*La liberté, la France recommence.*"¹⁹⁵ The Liberation released Guéhenno from his prison cell, where he had previously only been able to hold onto the idea of France. The Occupation experience, therefore, is perfectly enclosed within the confines of his text, and is concluded with the termination of the narrative. Werth, who had always felt frustratingly out of the grasp of history throughout the murky climate of the Occupation period, was overcome at the Liberation with a cognisance that he had reached the end of a historically significant period: "*Je ne savais pas que l'histoire existait. Je ne croyais pas à l'histoire. Et voici que tout est plein de résonances historiques. Ma poitrine est gonflée de l'histoire.*"¹⁹⁶ This was a definite change in thinking on his behalf, which points to a wider significance in relation to our broader study.

There is for these diarists none of the uncertainty associated with the beginning of the Occupation, which can be explained by the fact that they believed

¹⁹³ This is not as apparent with the testimony of Rist as it is with the testimonies of Werth, Guéhenno and Bobkowski. His concern for what kind of government would be set in place after the Liberation compelled him to continue writing, though it is clear that he did so on an irregular and less detailed basis.

¹⁹⁴ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.613. (25.8.44)

¹⁹⁵ Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, p.438. (25.8.44)

¹⁹⁶ Werth, *Déposition*, p.723. (24.8.44)

that the Liberation had brought closure to the Occupation. The same cannot be said for June 1940 in that the Occupation did not bring closure to the *débâcle*. The Occupation brought an end to the fighting but it did not bring the diarists any closer to the restoration of peace. No one in the summer of 1940 could have possibly conceived of the direction that Vichy would take but everyone was certain that the Liberation spelt the end for Vichy:

*Ce qui est surprenant, c'est l'évanouissement total et sans bruit de tout ce qui touche à Vichy. Personne ne sait rien de l'ancien gouvernement. Mais personne non plus ne demande à savoir quelque chose.*¹⁹⁷

It would take time for every region of France to be liberated but the liberation of Paris would, nonetheless, officially restore France to its position before the war. There was a willingness to leave the sordid chapter of Vichy behind them, whereas these very diarists had been adamant throughout the Occupation that they should never lose sight of how the Occupation had come about. Werth would be overcome with emotion at the sight of the liberating forces but the presence of killing machines was a direct contradiction to this joy, not to mention a reminder of his nation's suffering. Yet he refused to allow that to get in the way of his elation:

*Ce sentiment est-il donc si compliqué, si difficile à saisir? Ceux à qui je l'ai avoué m'ont tous dit: «Vous oubliez ce qu'ils ont fait, les assassinats, les tortures...» Je n'oublie rien. Mais un homme humilié, son humiliation est en moi.*¹⁹⁸

In that sense, these diarists accord the Occupation years a parenthetical aspect, which suggests that they preferred to emphasise the discontinuity of the Occupation period.

The resolution implicit in these testimonies does not figure so clearly with the other diarists. The majority exhibit a real sense of irresolution, whereby the problems encountered during the Occupation appear to persist and essentially remain unresolved. Gide, for example, would exhibit none of the pride or sense of history displayed by Werth in the closing of the Occupation experience:

N'avoir rien à faire, le cerveau vide, les yeux fatigués... Jamais encore attente ne m'a paru si longue; et sans doute précisément parce que les événements se précipitent. Un ordre de mission pour Rome doit m'atteindre sous peu, et m'envoyer en Italie, alors que c'est en France que je voudrais être déjà; que je pourrais être... Ah! qu'il me tarde! Je crains de manquer de souffle au dernier moment pour cette dernière côte à gravir; n'avoir plus le temps d'embrasser les quelques-uns que je voudrais pourtant revoir avant de fermer les yeux pour toujours. J'écoute à la radio, six fois par jour, les

¹⁹⁷ Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.433. (27.8.44)

¹⁹⁸ Werth, *Déposition*, pp.725-726. (25.8.44)

*mêmes nouvelles que déjà j'avais lues dans le journal du matin, comme si mon attentive impatience pouvait hâter les événements...*¹⁹⁹

It is clear that France did not represent for Gide what it did for Werth. He allowed his individual concerns to overshadow the national significance of what had happened in France. Perhaps this can be explained by his geographical situation in Algeria but there seems to be an underlying failure to recognise that anything had changed for him with the Liberation.

Most of the diarists preferred to emphasise the continuity of the Occupation period not only in terms of before and after June 1940 but also in terms of before and after the Liberation. Galtier-Boissière had observed how those who hated the Republic had exploited the events of 1940 to achieve their goals. He saw the same thing occurring after the Liberation: “*Nous concluons que les ex-torturés n'ont rien de plus pressé, en période révolutionnaire, que de devenir tortionnaires.*”²⁰⁰ There was certainly the expression of joy at the liberation of France but this was undermined by the recognition that there appeared to be an endless cycle of vengeance. The following passage from Roussin illustrates how the unpleasant nature of the acts carried out after the Liberation appear to have overshadowed his joy at the liberation of France:

*Mais je ne raconterai pas ici ce qui le fut si souvent depuis, de ces journées à la fois bouleversantes par la liberté retrouvée et ignobles à certaines heures de basse vengeance. Le comique côtoyait l'héroïsme et parfois l'odieux: on pouvait voir une ménagère invétérée donner quelques coups de plumeau sur une barricade et des femmes rasées – croix gammées au rouge à lèvres sur le front et les joues – livrées aux crachats, aux insultes, aux bousculades de la foule.*²⁰¹

De Gaulle's position on the purge that followed the Liberation was that it was imperative that those who had betrayed France should be brought swiftly to justice but those who had acted faithfully should not be caught up with these traitors, who were firmly in the minority.²⁰² The ‘horizontal collaborators’ were a convenient outlet for the frustrations and resentment built up over the ‘dark years’, as they were a visible reminder of the indignity of the period. But does Roussin's unease with such vengeful acts not also suggest that he felt that very few French had acted nobly or heroically during the Occupation?

¹⁹⁹ Gide, *Journal*, p.276. (5-7.9.44)

²⁰⁰ Galtier-Boissière, *Journal*, p.255. (21.10.44) See also p.222. (29.8.44)

²⁰¹ Roussin, *Rideau gris et habit vert*, pp.151-152. See also Moret, *Journal d'une mauvaise Française*, p.227. (29.8.44)

²⁰² Galtier-Boissière, *Journal*, p.249. (14.10.44)

The problem was that, along with many aspects of the Occupation, it was usually very difficult to differentiate between those who had served France and those who had betrayed France. At the Liberation, the French once again appeared to clamour around a single individual. De Gaulle would refuse to acknowledge the existence of the Vichy government in a similar way to Pétain's attempt to separate himself from the chaotic years of the 1930s. However, just because France appeared to be united behind one man does not mean that the French were united in thought. The Liberation, as in the summer of 1940, saw some motivated by revenge and others motivated by a desire for a fresh start. The overwhelming majority, however, continued to remain outside these areas of active participation. This is illustrated by the diarists' unease over the propagation of the myth that Paris, and not the American forces, drove out the Germans:

*Les manchettes des journaux: Paris conquiert sa liberté par les armes, Paris se libère lui-même. Et toute la France se libère elle-même; c'est tout juste si c'est avec l'aide modeste des Alliés. Dans une semaine, on ne parlera plus du tout des Américains ni des Anglais. Le coq! Il est difficile de trouver meilleur symbole. Toute cette assemblée, qui cause sous les porches et dans les cafés, bat des ailes et pousse des cocoricos, dresse la crête... et attend les conserves et le chocolat américains! Mais dès qu'on entend le bruit lointain d'une motocyclette allemande, la rue se vide en l'espace de trois secondes, les portes se ferment et on se bagarre près du trou de la serrure pour voir. Paris «se bat».*²⁰³

Only a tiny minority within France fought against the Germans during the Occupation. Although Resistance numbers would swell near the end of the Occupation, they would never attain a significant proportion of the population. Roussin was well aware of the eagerness to give credence to de Gaulle's myth of a Resistant France:

*La France paraissait le pays des héros inconnus. Qui n'avait pas appartenu à quelque organisation clandestine? Celles-ci fleurissaient d'autant plus qu'elles étaient secrètes et par conséquent ignorées. Se comptaient sur les doigts ceux qui n'avaient pas, dans une clandestinité héroïque, servi de la noble cause. S'ils n'en étaient pas les martyrs, il n'y avait vraiment pas de leur faute. Ils ne pouvaient exprès se faire fusiller!*²⁰⁴

The focus appeared to be on getting through to the other side unscathed. Collaboration and resistance required active and committed participation but there

²⁰³ Bobkowski, *En guerre et en paix*, p.611. (22.8.44) See also Galtier-Boissière, *Journal*, p.210, (24.8.44) and Toesca, *Cinq ans de patience*, p.327. (20.8.44)

²⁰⁴ Roussin, *Rideau gris et habit vert*, p.152. See also Galtier-Boissière, *Journal*, p.230. (30.8.44)

was much greater flexibility within the infinitely broader grey zone of accommodation:

*Entre la Collaboration et la Résistance, il semble qu'il y ait la différence du blanc au noir. Et il est vrai que quelques êtres, dès juin 1940, ont trouvé dans leurs profondeurs, leur certitude. Mais combien ont oscillé, sans qu'on puisse bien savoir s'ils cédaient à leur intérêt, aux pressions des propagandes, à un étourdissement par les chocs de l'époque.*²⁰⁵

The observations made just before the liberation of Paris by diarists, such as de Beauvoir and Thérive, represent the wider problem of how the behaviour of the French during the Occupation should be interpreted: "*La matinée paraissait paisible; on apercevait sur les berges de la Seine des pêcheurs à la ligne et quelques jeunes gens qui prenaient le soleil, en maillots de bain; mais des F.F.I. se cachait derrière les balustrades des quais.*"²⁰⁶ Throughout the Occupation, the French waited for external forces to deliver them from their German captors. Should this indifference to the war be interpreted in a positive or negative light? Diarists such as Werth, Mauriac and Guéhenno, would often question whether this indifference simply reflected an acceptance of defeat and an inability to look beyond one's personal interests. Others, such as Gide and Galtier-Boissière, preferred to view this indifference as a means of overcoming the defeat of 1940 and lasting until the end.

The same dilemma can be seen with the different attitudes to work. The owners of the newspaper *L'Illustration* would be attacked from all quarters after the Liberation. They published a justification of their decision to keep printing whilst being under German supervision: "*Peu de gens savent – osent-ils écrire – ce qu'il leur fallut de courage et de résistance pour soutenir cette lutte de quatre années. Seule leur conscience connaît le prix de cet effort.*"²⁰⁷ Yet Galtier-Boissière argued vigorously that nothing would have changed had these owners left the paper in the hands of the Germans. Those writers working for the collaborationist press, and those such as Guéhenno and Mauriac who wrote for the literary resistance, are rare examples where the black and white notions of collaboration and resistance are appropriate. The majority, however, found it impossible to follow the austere example of Guéhenno, who refused to have any interaction or dealings with the Germans. Yet diarists, such as Duméril and Toesca, who worked alongside the Germans every day, certainly did not disgrace themselves. Those, like Cocteau, who

²⁰⁵ Werth, *Déposition*, p.566. (4.2.44)

²⁰⁶ De Beauvoir, *La force de l'âge*, p.608. See also Thérive, *L'envers du décor*, p.212. (13.8.44)

²⁰⁷ Galtier-Boissière, *Journal*, p.241. (1.10.44)

fall into the grey zone of *accommodation*, present much more difficulty in deciphering the merits or flaws of their behaviour: “*La France, sous l’occupation allemande, avait le droit et le devoir de se montrer insolente, de manger, de briller, de braver l’opresseur, de dire: “Tu m’enlèves tout et il me reste tout”*.”²⁰⁸ Such an attitude seems sound in theory. Guitry would similarly present some sound arguments after the Liberation in his attempt to clear his name. It could be argued that Duméril and Guitry, for example, shared a similar attitude in that they both refused to allow external considerations to get in the way of doing what they felt was best for France.

The problem was that each case would be judged on an individual basis after the Liberation. The diarists would often respond to the significant events of the Occupation in a uniform manner but the experience of everyday life would be influential in shaping their attitudes and behaviour. The diarists’ personal experiences, therefore, rather than their collective experience, would determine how they were perceived after the Liberation:

*Les gens qui font la queue devant la boulangerie suivent du regard [une patrouille allemande]. De l’hostilité, oui; de la haine, pas. Seuls ceux qui ont souffert dans leur propre cœur, dans leur propre chair parviennent à cette violence qui s’appelle haine et qui peut mener au meurtre.*²⁰⁹

The overall experience of the Occupation would differ from one diarist to another, irrespective of whether they came from the same region or background. Furthermore, the fact that they overwhelmingly remained outside the notions of collaboration and resistance prohibits any definitive view of how the French acted during the Occupation. To paraphrase Paul Valéry, if humanity exists only thanks to the mass of people for whom survival is more important than action, its fate is determined by those who act and decide. This minority was divided into two heterogeneous but irreconcilable groups in occupied France: those who acted in the goal of liberating France and those who acted in the goal of bringing France and Germany together.²¹⁰ This would have important ramifications for the direction France would take after the Liberation. Did those who had fought in the Resistance have any right to control the destiny of France whilst those who had collaborated deserve to be excluded from its future? And how could France be seen to be representing the majority? How was it

²⁰⁸ Cocteau, *Journal*, p.557. (23.9.44)

²⁰⁹ Toesca, *Cinq ans de patience*, p.328. (22.8.44)

²¹⁰ Hoffmann, *Essais sur la France*, pp.68-69.

possible to reconcile everyone's differences? In this light, it is easy to see how the Occupation period continues to weigh so heavily on contemporary France.

CONCLUSION

The study of private diaries written during the Occupation of France 1940-1944, as a primary source, is a relatively unexplored path of inquiry. The fact that increasing numbers of historians readily use them as a secondary source for their research proves their value as historical tools. The primary focus on these individual testimonies offers us a new perspective, which History often overlooks. The individual, despite the claim of Güsdorf, does have a place in history. Furthermore, the diaries prove that an individual is able to record history at the time that particular individual is experiencing it. History from above strives for order and firm conclusions, whereas history from below has a more chaotic view of events. The temptation, therefore, is to think that the only conclusion one can draw with regard to testimonial literature written during the Occupation is the redundancy of definitive conclusions. The problematic nature of reaching conclusions on the private diaries written during the Occupation period should not, however, render them irrelevant as an historical source. Rather, it should be seen as embodying the highly complex nature of the Occupation period. The fact that the individual testimonies bring this complexity into focus, thereby challenging the simplifying tendencies of historical conclusions, is reason alone for further pursuing this field of study. Their personalised approach to the living of history is a reminder that the French endured the Occupation period on an individual level, which prohibits any globalising view of the period.

The first chapter shows that France was far from a nation of *quarante millions de Pétainistes* and the French were even far less approving of the Vichy regime. The knowledge of what the Vichy regime would become was withheld from them. They endured the Occupation from day to day without ever knowing when the end would exactly come. The diaries afford us, therefore, a personal insight into a given moment in time, free from the shadow of events to come. The diarists show in the summer of June 1940 that they were more concerned with the immediate past rather than the immediate future. Moreover, as the epigraph in the introduction states: *Au fond de l'histoire, il y a des sentiments*. It is always useful to bear this phrase in mind when

discussing the historical events of the Occupation. Behind the momentous historical events of the *débâcle* and the defeat lie the impressions and desires of every individual who witnessed those events. The Occupation may well have affected the French on a national level in a uniform manner, in the sense that France was occupied by the Germans and was forced to supply the German war machine in manpower, foodstuffs and materials. Yet on an individual level, one's experience of the Occupation became infinitely more varied. It was not just a matter of whether one lived in the Occupied Zone or the Unoccupied Zone, whether one was rich or poor. The differences in attitude can be attributed to more subtle reasons. One's Jewish origins could force one into hiding, whereas one's Polish origins could force one into believing that the Occupation did not necessarily place the French in a dire position. The Occupation could be seen by one individual, like Guéhenno, as a prison, whereas another, like Cocteau, might not acknowledge the notion of a prison at all. The diarists may have been divided on what the defeat meant for the French and what was the next best step yet it is precisely this difference in opinion which is of historical significance.

The Occupation is the most heavily researched period in French history. The fact that historians continue to study this period today not only indicates the complexity of the period but also the unresolved nature of the historiography. That is not to say that historical consensus has not been reached on many platforms but, rather, that many questions still remain unanswered. The second chapter reveals how much the historiography has evolved but the issue of Jewish persecution in Occupied France is an example of where the historiography needs to further grow. Moreover, the unresolved issues relating to Vichy France cannot always be attributed to the complexities and ambiguities of the period itself. The lack of consensus on several recent issues of national importance with links to Vichy France has brought about a clouding or distortion of the past. The trial of Maurice Papon is an example of how the lack of resolution and conciliation after the Liberation allowed the demons of the Occupation period to continually haunt the French. The prosecution called the historian Robert Paxton as an expert witness but many would express unease at what they saw as the intervention by historians in the historical process itself. Indeed, the ambiguous verdict both illustrated and perpetuated the lingering inability or unwillingness on the part of the French to agree on a single interpretation of what

occurred during the years 1940-1944.¹ The Liberation, and well beyond, would see different groups try to stamp their authority on what happened during the Occupation in order to propel their respective organisations to the forefront of debate. Jean-Noël Jeanneney, for example, would write in the introduction of Rist's *Une saison gâtée*:

*Quarante ans ont passé, et notre mémoire collective n'a pas cessé d'être hantée, modelée, bousculée par le contrecoup de ces temps-là. Le récit ne finit pas d'en être réécrit, au gré des sensibilités mobiles des générations successives, au gré des fiertés héritées, des plaidoyers obsessionnels et des colorations rétrospectives qu'impose la suite d'une histoire en marche. Le moment n'est pas venu – viendra-t-il jamais? – où se fixeraient définitivement quelques interprétations indiscutées éclairant d'une lumière immobile la France de l'occupation...*²

Inherent in these words is the belief that the answers to this fervent desire for a definitive view of the Occupation period lie within the pages of the diaries written during this period. Their testimonies remain unchanged and untainted by the various factions and predispositions of today.

This is what unites all the diaries examined in this thesis. The individual testimonies may well have been written for different reasons, they may well have been written under different circumstances and represent fundamentally different points of view, but they all remain firmly anchored to that past. They may offer a personalised window into the world of 1940-1944 but it is a window that can only be accessed through their words. In that sense, their private testimony of the period remains forever frozen in that time and unaffected by the shadow of events to come. This is the advantage of the private diaries, as we are not only able to see their judgements and impressions at a particular point in time but also we are able to see how these attitudes and beliefs change over time. There may well be a significant unwillingness or refusal on the part of the overwhelming majority of the diarists examined in this thesis to privately discuss the issue of Jewish persecution in France. Yet the few references to this issue by certain diarists provide enough evidence to suggest that the persecution of the Jews aroused more sympathy as well as outrage amongst the French the longer the Occupation went on. The same could be said for the attitudes of the French with respect to Vichy and the German occupiers. The longer the Occupation wore on, the more angry and hostile the population became and yet the notion of *accommodation*, which historians apply to the majority of the

¹ Sarah Fishman and Leonard Smith, *France at War. Vichy and the historians*, (Berg: New York, 2000), pp.1-2.

² Rist, *Une saison gâtée*, p.9.

French population throughout the Occupation, does not reflect this growing resentment. The private diaries also show that this process was far from linear. The Anglo-American landing in North Africa in November 1942 can be seen from a historical perspective as a significant turning-point but the diarists certainly did not uniformly or irrevocably share emotionally in this change of fortunes.

The third chapter suggests additional reasons as to why the majority of the French population chose neither to actively collaborate nor actively resist during the Occupation. The question why the overwhelming majority of the French population remained under the collective banner of *accommodation* appears to be neglected by the historiography of the period. History from above has a tendency to search for the 'big events' to answer the 'big questions'. The impact of the banal, everyday events on the French is often overlooked. The constant quest for food, the moral dilemma of interacting with or working for the German occupiers quite possibly had more of an influence on the diarists' attitudes than the big events examined in the second chapter. The diarists may well have been divided on what constituted treason or patriotic duty but they were, nevertheless, all cognisant of these issues. The French knew that their actions would eventually be judged after the war and the fact that de Gaulle preferred to punish only a tiny minority after the Liberation should not detract from that.

A further comprehensive study of the questions raised by the diarists during and after the Occupation deserves to be undertaken. Were the French responsible for the government representing them? Should the actions of a treacherous minority form a collective stain on the wider French population? Did the *bourgeoisie* deserve to be singled out for their inclination to accept the occupation of France? Was post-Liberation France simply a continuation of the Occupation years under the guise of different forms? The responses to such questions have already been answered to some extent in this thesis. But they also constitute a further realm of inquiry, where the individual testimonies of these and other diarists can again play a primary role.

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